

COMMUNISM AT THE DOOR

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hauling corn in his oxcart. Russian soldiers told him to stop, get out, and give them the oxen, the cart, and the corn. He insisted that they must pay him, at which they laughed. Stubborn as only a *Shop* peasant can be, he sat rigidly in his cart to protect his own. From this point on versions differed: some said he was pulled out and beaten, others that he was shot and left dead by the roadside. And always the tale ended with, "The Germans always paid us, but the Russians never did."

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But the Communists offered an explanation for the differences in the behavior of the two armies. The Russians invaded in battle order, which necessitated eating off the land on a catch-as-catch-can basis. The Germans, on the other hand, had sent large staffs ahead to make preparations for the coming of their troops. The net effect upon the peasant mentality was radically different, since property rights seemed violated by the Russians and respected by the Nazis.

Eventually a detachment of Russians had been established around Dragalevtsy. They frequented the taverns so constantly and with such enthusiasm that the peasants had a new saying: "There's nothing worse than drunken Russians." They began to judge the Russian nation by the off-time indulgences of its soldiers.

Although the "great disillusionment" regarding Russian soldiers had begun soon after their arrival, the people still hoped that all would go well politically. Most of the major political parties—the Agrarians, the Zveno, and the Democrats—joined with the Communists in September, 1944, to form a coalition, which they called the Fatherland Front. It was this government that conducted the purge, or the sentencing of about three thousand men and women by the people's courts on the grounds of collaboration with the enemy. About two thousand of these were executed. Some observers now feel, in the light of later developments, that the real basis of selecting victims for trial was not only their complicity with the Germans but also their danger as potential rallying points for a counterrevolution against the Fatherland Front. Two Dragalevtsy young men were tried and executed for collaboration with the Nazis. According to village reports, Communist sympathizers tried to exert pressure upon the new priest in the hope of preventing his officiating at any funeral ceremonies or memorial services for these men. According to the Com-

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668 munists, they were traitors. The priest still considered them children of God and officiated anyway, although they were not buried in the local cemetery.

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648 By the New Year, 1945, many of the political leaders in the Fatherland Front discerned the handwriting on the wall. The Agrarians and the Democratic party especially recognized the Front for what it was—a Communist screen for actual control. All the while, the Communists—a minority party—had been growing stronger and were nurtured by the Red Army officers who really directed Bulgarian affairs. British and American army officers were represented in the Allied Control Commission which was under arbitrary Russian direction. American and British diplomatic representatives were somewhat more effectual, but only within a rather limited sphere of activity. With the cards stacked in their favor, the Communists controlled the key ministries, chief among them being the Ministry of Interior which had charge of the police and local administration. Therefore, early in 1945 there was a gradual loss of popular enthusiasm for the Fatherland Front, with the real defection coming in May. At that time the leading representatives of the Agrarian and Democratic parties, as well as a section of the Socialist party, withdrew from the Front to form an opposition. In Dragalevtsy, this move met with tremendous support, for there the Agrarian was the major party. The Zveno group, which had engineered the *coup d'état* of 1934 against the king, stayed with the Fatherland Front in which they held the premiership and other prominent positions.

A few former acquaintances of mine had joined the Communist party and were sincerely trying to win their fellow countrymen to their cause. They were inclined to be impatient with those who differed from them, and still felt very much on the defensive. Their condescending attitude toward members of other parties co-operating with them in the Fatherland Front was expressed in a comment making the round: "Oh, these other members of the Front are our water boys." They'll carry the water to the top of the hill for us and then we'll take it over."

[666] The next political crisis arose in August, 1945. The government had scheduled an election through which it had planned to obtain a

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representing the majority of the young people, had an increasing voice in village affairs and were aggressive in their approach to practical problems. Part of this aggressiveness was directed against the young people at that time still active in the ZMS (Agrarian Youth Society), which was a part of the opposition. 668 575 883 178

Another means by which the Communists gained support was in the favoritism shown to party members in the distribution of rationed articles. Just as the ward boss of an American city or the prewar mayor of Dragalevtsy learned that gratitude prompts support or that favors done call for favors in return, so the Fatherland Front made good use of its opportunities. Some of its generosity served purely political ends. The mayor of Sofia, so the Dragalevtsy peasants said, gave one million leva at Christmas time to the *Septemvriches*, or National Children's Communist Organization. Opposition groups, of course, received no such largesse. 668 661

But many of the criticisms of pork-barrel politics were due to misunderstanding. The peasants of Dragalevtsy could usually procure no clothing coupons if they had wool at home, and most of them did have a small supply which they were allowed to keep. This amount was based on family size and any surplus was requisitioned by the government. Artisans and laborers, however, who had no sheep, who worked in factories or at their trade, received the clothing coupons, for that was the only way they had of obtaining wearing apparel. Wool and cotton, thread, and goods were still so scarce in both villages and cities that no one group was content with what it had, and peasants were inclined to ascribe whatever others received as due to favoritism rather than the merits of the case. The proof that wool was scarce was the relative inactivity of the carding and spinning *sedenki*, the working bees so popular among the women.

"Why don't you have *sedenki* now," I asked.

"We have no wool to work," was the plausible answer.

Communist party members who used their political standing for self-aggrandizement and enrichment were supposed to be severely dealt with by the party authorities. One story making the rounds in Dragalevtsy had done much to discredit the Communists with those in the opposition. Since living in a Balkan village is a great deal like 668 661 687

668 living in a goldfish bowl, it was not long before the peasants knew
 661 that almost a million leva (notice how rounded or approximate the
 687 numbers are in such stories) had disappeared from local public funds.
 There was no official explanation as to its whereabouts, but one Communist had become quite rich and built himself a house better than the village expected of him. Later he was expelled from the party, reputedly because of conversion of funds, but even this action did not restore the funds to the public treasury.

Unquestionably, a loyal supporter of the Fatherland Front was able at times to use his political connections for personal advantage. The peasants would have been surprised if this were not the case, for they philosophically said, "Whoever sticks his fingers in honey is apt to lick them."

207 Mention was made in the last chapter of the phenomenal increase
 668 in radio ownership since 1937. Now about every third home has a receiving set and is thus in contact with the propaganda line of the government-controlled broadcasting service. Listening to the radio had become a new recreational pattern for many people. Over and over again I asked them what programs they preferred. The men, perhaps because they deemed it the proper answer, often said that they listened to the news. Quite a few were quick to add, "It's nothing but lies though." Many of the women preferred the folk music, and the young people jazz. Long speeches claimed few listeners. The net effect of radio listening then was recreational, with some political influence exerted upon the devotees of the newscast. As yet, the radio had not become a channel for education or raising the standard of living. I wondered, too, just when it would, for the peasants had little hesitation in turning off the set if the program became too serious, and most educational programs under Communist leadership were inclined to be serious.

204 American and British influence was sufficiently strong to force
 668 the Fatherland Front officials to allow an opposition press. Although this press was beset with difficulties in 1945, it nevertheless became a vehement, at times vitriolic, critic of the regime in power. It took a strong pro-American, pro-British complexion, though never out-and-out anti-Russian. A good check on Agrarian claims of majority sup-

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The Soviet trade unions generally supervise the carrying out of the plans for the construction of dwellings and communal buildings and take part in the distribution of new buildings to the workers, and in this connection their proposals have a decisive importance.—Leonid Nikolaevich Solovyov, Secretary, All-Union Central Council of Trades Unions, USSR.

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half an hour more than twice a month.”²² It should be understood that the minimum consequence of a dismissal is labor mobilization.

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The following remarks of an authority on Soviet labor have full validity for Communist Bulgaria as well: “The fear of being late became a nightmare to workers, many of whom had no watches or clocks, and sent them speeding to work in frantic haste. The same fear made them gulp their lunch as quickly as possible.”²³ It sounds unbelievable that such a casual infraction as tardiness can ultimately lead to imprisonment or forced labor.

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As to inefficiency, the recently enacted Decree for Payment of Dead Time and Rejects in Industry, Construction and Transport²⁴ supplemented the disciplinary punishments of the Labor Code by introducing financial liability for stoppage and defective output. The most unusual feature represents the fact that a worker is deprived of up to 30 per cent of his wage even if he is not responsible for the stoppage or defective output.²⁵

This Communist anomaly is even more clear in the provisions regulating the financial responsibility for damages caused to the enterprise. Guided by the principle that “socialist property” is more precious than

²² Grounds for dismissal in Art. 33 of the Labor Code.

²³ Work by Schwarz, cited at footnote 1, p. 105.

²⁴ *Izvestiya na Presidiuma na Narodnoto Sobranie*, No. 32, April 21, 1953.

²⁵ Art. 2 and 7 of the Decree for Payment of Dead Time and Rejects.

²⁶ Cf. Arts. 1 and 51 of the Penal Code of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic (*Ugolovnyy Kodeks RSFSR*, in Russian). Also, Arts. 1 and 31 of the Bulgarian Penal Code of 1951.

²⁷ Art. 96 of the Labor Code.

²⁸ Cf. Art. 2 of the Penal Code.

²⁹ Art. 206, par. 2 of the Labor Code.

³⁰ This complete disregard for tradition and objective conditions has so much disorganized the national economy and antagonized the

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human life and that the "social harm" of an offense is all that matters," Communist legislation makes a worker "responsible for an amount higher than the actually caused damages,"⁴⁴ besides, of course, his liability under criminal law.

It is evident that all these financial liability provisions not only reduce the already very low wages of the Bulgarian workers but also violate internationally accepted legal principles—such as the exclusion of liability exceeding actual damage or of liability without guilt or negligence. This is not surprising if one bears in mind that the Bulgarian Penal Code also recognizes the application of the principle of analogy in criminal law,⁴⁵ and the Labor Code proclaims the principle that "acts of indictment have the force of proof until the contrary is proven"⁴⁶—that is, one is presumed guilty unless he proves his innocence.

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Analysis of labor and relations in Communist Bulgaria leads to the conclusion that the Bulgarian labor pattern is a carbon copy of the Soviet original. Neither democratic traditions nor social harmony have been taken into consideration. In their blind imitation, the Bulgarian Communists are trying to change the very basis of Bulgarian economy—from agriculture to heavy industry—as if they were mightier than the very nature which deprived the country of the elements required for such a transformation. Their only guiding light is the Soviet example, no matter how detrimental its application on Bulgarian soil might be.⁴⁷

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The Bulgarian case—most suitable to test Communism in export—has brutally refuted any illusion that Communism can be "different" if applied in more advanced societies. The tragic paradox of the Communist experiment with the Bulgarian workers is that the alleged primary beneficiaries of the new "socialist order" have, instead, received the harshest possible deal. [The End]

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population that purges of scapegoats and acts of despair have been a permanent feature in Bulgaria as well. The workers, in particular, have defied pointed guns during the recent open unrest in Plovdiv, the second largest Bulgarian city, and in many other cities (Pleven, Pernik, Haskovo, Gorna Dzhumaja). In order to prevent the worst, the government, under Moscow's guidance, has announced a so-called new course, consisting of promises to raise the living standard and to relax the socialist labor discipline. The implementation of these promises is still to come. They clearly imply, however, that the Communist experiment has not succeeded in either converting the Bulgarian workers to Communism or breaking their spirit of resistance. (For details, see work cited at footnote 29, Ch. VIII-X.)

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000 hastened the deterioration of the standard of morality in Bulgaria. When that benevolent influence which was formerly exerted by the officer corps and initiated the youth of Bulgaria in its primary duty was removed by the underhand machinations of Bulgaria's neighbours, who purposely destroyed this part of the social framework in order better to disable Bulgaria, there was no longer any counterweight to the demoralising influences which demagogic politicians let loose in their blind pursuit of private interests. The dangers inherent in an uneducated electorate are clearly realised even by those who may be considered as spokesmen for the masses. Lord Snowden, in whose enlightened radicalism we may all confide, affirms in his „Labour and the New World“ p. 224: „Government by an autocracy is a danger and a tyranny. But the nominal government of an ignorant democracy may be a greater danger to the State than even the despotism of an autocracy. For behind the power of a nominally enfranchised democracy, there is no stronger force or restraining influence“.

All friends of Bulgaria should therefore feel grateful to that band of altruistic and courageous men who have volunteered to act as a „restraining influence“ and who have rushed in the nick of time to deflect their country from the road to perdition on which her unprincipled politicians were leading her.

661 And as for the record of Bulgarian politicians, and of Bulgarian Parliamentarism, we had better let independent and competent Bulgarian authorities express their views. The veteran educationalist and social writer, the Radical, Ivan Kepov, in one of his most illuminating books on Bulgaria, entitled „Our Vctuality“ p. 109, did not hesitate to declare: „From the time of the expulsion of our first prince, the whole system of government became a carrier of corruption. And in this stifling and

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- 661 pestiferous atmosphere only those with an iron will and exceptional moral force evaded the usual fate of the intelligentsia — moral debasement". Dr. Krestnikov, a distinguished psychiatrist, whose scientific works are known as far afield as Germany, in his booklet „On Social Themes", published in Sofia in the year 1926, makes this startling admission: „Of the 96 Ministers who have governed our country since its liberation, 48 have been condemned by State tribunals, while 8 Special Courts have been instituted to inquire into the dishonest acts of Ministers. The behaviour of our politicians has been characterised by hankering after power, and by violence... We led a more virtuous life under the Turks; then mass violence and brutality were unknown among us".

And Stoyan Mihailovski, the poet-philosopher, and certainly the most puissant Balkan genius of modern times, who was a keen observer of public life and a profound moralist, stigmatised in a forceful apophthegm his countrymen's tendency to allow their egoistic impulses to run riot, which may be rendered by:

„Once slaves, now self-enslaved are we,
And from this cursed self-imposed yoke,
Only by our efforts shall we become free".

- ooo In a backward country nothing can be so demoralising as a bad example set by those at the top. And unfortunately Bulgaria during her brief independent career had seldom an inspiring model set before her. Walter Bagehot's profound wise dictum that „Rigid, definite, concise law is the primary want of primitive societies, that which they need above anything else, that which is requisite before they could gain anything else" seems to have been unknown to, and unheard of by all those who in turn had charge of Bulgaria's destinies. And the Bulgarian, who by nature is an extreme egalitarian, a quality which is certainly not without its attractive sides, must

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648 garia to St. Petersburg, others wanted her chained to London, another party preferred Vienna, while a certain section had preferences for Berlin, and yet another group insisted that Bulgaria's foreign policy should be conducted from Constantinople. Unhappy land, her leaders endeavoured to tie her simultaneously to several mutually antagonistic protectors, and thus unwittingly acted against the interests of their country. Bulgaria suffered not so much from the treason of her neighbours, as from the short-sightedness and lack of scruples of those directing our foreign policy, in association with foreign consuls, whose protégés they were". (Kosta Arseniev, pp. 35-6.).

177 What moral forces remained, having survived Bulgaria's Europeanization, a process which was tantamount to the elimination of the patriarchal traditions of the Bulgarians, and their replacement by what was nothing but a thin veneer of civilization—were wholly absorbed in their conflict with Tsar Ferdinand, that great factor of evil in their country.

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577 He, in a true Machiavellian spirit, spread corruption broadcast, and vitiated the intelligentsia, in order to render all opposition to him impracticable and impossible. The diabolical refinements with which that process was pursued were set forth by Stoyan Mihailovsky, in his "Book for the Bulgarian people", published in 1897. The ease with which the intelligentsia succumbed to the malign influences which surrounded it, is chiefly due to its extreme poverty. Having sundered all connection with the peasant, artisan or trading class, from which he sprang, the intellectual scorned the idea of obtaining his livelihood by any other means than that of state employ. This desire to get employment under the Government, which is almost a passion among the Bulgarians, could not be satisfied in respect of every claimant owing to the limited number of public posts, and led to the formation of a legion of

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517 hungry office-seekers, ready to offer their support to any politician, who would hold out to them a promise of a State or municipal office. It is from this class, reckoned to number some 300,000 strong, that every party entrusted by the Crown with the task of government, recruited its staff, dangerously depleted during the lean years the party had passed in Opposition, and replaced all organs of authority, in order to influence and doctor the will of the electorate. A Cabinet would seldom owe its appointment to office to any other consideration than royal favour, for rarely indeed could it prove that it enjoyed the confidence of the people, since such a majority as it secured in the new Chamber was obtained by methods which were a negation of parliamentarism, and a clear violation of the national will.

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661 Party government in Bulgaria was always a disguised dictatorship, which imposed itself by artifices that barely permitted it to save the outward forms of parliamentarism. Except on three occasions; in 1879, 1901 and 1931, there was never a free expression of the national will. The Chamber was maintained merely to save appearances, and in order to give to the people the illusion that it participated in the government of the country. The chief aim of a party, when in power, was the enrichment of its partisans and the constitution of some reserves for the lean years it had to remain in opposition. The more the rapacious instincts of partisans were satisfied, the more would a party prosper and grow powerful. An attempt to restrain the greed of its adherents would inevitably have led to its disruption. Corruption, therefore, was the basis of party life. Such an atmosphere paralysed every spiritual activity, and thwarted every noble initiative. Idealism, in fact, became an obstacle to the progress of a party, and law-breaking and speculation the main springs of its success. Before abandoning office, almost every government would vote

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an amnesty commuting or completely abrogating such sanctions as had been inflicted on their partisans for the illegalities committed by them. The Minister of Justice pointed out on December 29, 1931, that since 1881, 35 amnesties had been voted. There was no deterrent to crime, and this is why crime is more prevalent among the State functionary class than among any other. In Bulgaria, since the Bulgarians are certainly the most moral and honest people in the Balkans, and it was the perversity, short-sightedness and cynical selfishness of the politicians which was leading them astray. This deplorable state of affairs was the inevitable consequence of the malevolent foreign influences to which Bulgaria was subjected, and of the too-advanced political Constitution, with which she suddenly found herself endowed; for centuries of slavery do not constitute a good training for the rational exercise of liberty. This combination of adverse circumstances has led to a catastrophe, which is at once political economic and moral, and which seems almost complete, for the Bulgarians are beginning to lose faith in themselves. 661

The same portents that heralded the downfall of the first and second Bulgarian empires, became again visible. Antagonism between the people and the State was increasing, the people had lost faith in their leaders, who were incapable of sacrificing their private ambitions for their nation's welfare, or of emerging from that stifling atmosphere of personal squabbles and intrigues, in which they lay enwrapped. The counterpart of the rascally bolgars of yore was supplied by the demagogues of the Agrarian party, who, like the tyrant in Plato's "Republic" considered "that it is easiest to rule over a hard pressed community for the taxes they have to pay will impoverish them, so that they will be compelled to give their minds to getting their daily bread, and not to conspiring against him," and who do not scruple to instigate the masses to appropriate 661
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181 the hard-earned property of their political opponents, thereby driving the more stable elements to aggressive reaction. The problem of renovation is all the more difficult owing to the national psyche having been perverted by centuries of slavery. It turned the Bulgarian peasant into an extreme egotist, into a man who had no notion of what social solidarity connoted. Excluded for so long from participation in public affairs, he came to view them with extreme suspicion, as something separate from his existence and antagonistic to his private interests. Being treated by the Turk as he was previously by his own nobles, and actually by the intelligentsia as an inferior, he came to consider himself as a being apart, in opposition to all the world.

Experience taught him that wealth was the only means by which he could improve his position, and ensure for himself a measure of respect. Hence his grasping and individualistic propensities. His extreme individualism makes him refractory even to Socialism, for he feels that his instincts are in harmony with anarchism, rather than with the methodical theories of Karl Marx.

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181 The Bulgarian has further developed another lamentable characteristic: that of a boundless disrespect for the law. The law was looked upon as an instrument of extortion, to be used by those in power for their own ends and to be modified or broken by them at their own pleasure. The law has never been for the Bulgarian a system under which the rights of the individual were safeguarded. The widely-diffused notion among members of advanced communities that the law embodies the common conscience and the common interest, not only has not percolated into the depths of the nation, but has not even penetrated the superficial strata of its leading circles, and until recently one witnessed the most iniquitous illegalities being committed by the party in power, which abuses, though they

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rouse to fever-heat the indignation of the foreigner, leave the Bulgarian indifferent. It is this lack of public spirit and an extreme self-centredness which renders him apathetic to the wrongs inflicted on others, and which prevent the creation of an alert public opinion capable of checking such misdeeds as the country has been suffering from.

Such is the social inheritance of the Bulgarian. It is with such a mentality that he has emerged to free life. It would be erroneous however, to assume that psychically the Bulgarians stand at a lower level than their neighbours, or that being a backward people they deserved the dismemberment they sustained by the Treaties of Berlin and Neuilly, to the profit of the other Balkan peoples who are more or less of the same mentality, and what is worse, do not excel by those stirring household virtues of the Bulgarians, that go some way to counterbalance their shortcomings, which could be eradicated by a proper system of education.

The high level of the spate of demagoguery which submerged Bulgaria was attained soon after the termination of the world war, when her enemies had disarmed her and when, through the weakening of the military factor, the peasant politician Stambuliiski, secured complete control of the state machine. The country then experienced all the horrors of a jacquerie. The evils engendered by the Agrarian regime are tersely set forth by Kosturkov, the capable and outspoken leader of the former Radical party, in a speech delivered in the Sobranie on Sept. 4, 1925: "With few exceptions every Bulgarian government had sown the seeds of corruption and demoralisation, they also however left some positive creative work to their credit. Stambuliiski's regime, however, has left behind an indelible furrow of corruption which it will take scores of years to remove; it is a moral scar that will be most difficult to cure. Moral perversion has been disseminated by the authorities along

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• 661 the whole length and breadth of our unhappy country and it is the worst form of corruption we have yet experienced for it has revolutionised village life from its very foundations." This depressing diagnosis is confirmed by Dr. Djidrov, a distinguished economist and political writer, who in a speech in the Sobranie on Nov. 16, 1927 characterised the Agrarian regime as "the most destructive Bulgaria had experienced and the one which completed the ruin caused by the war." The nefarious influence which this high flood of demagoguery has had on village life in general may be gauged by the concluding lines of M. Petko Rossen's most readable and instructive book "Among the people," and published in 1933: "Every right-thinking man who is capable of observation will be struck with dismay. To-day our village is in the pangs of such a religious, moral and public crisis, that he who entertains the hope of saving the State and public order on this, the thickest layer of our community, is bound to seek refuge in a monastery in his despair."

669 The Ministerial crisis which broke out in May 1934 was pregnant with grave consequences. Bulgaria was faced with the dilemma of placing the Agrarians, the most numerous political party, anew in the seat of power, or of delivering herself up, hands and feet bound to Prof. Tsankov, who had in the meanwhile donned a brand-new black shirt of a Fascist, and was garrulously exhorting his compatriots to adopt the Mussolinian creed. It was a case of Hobson's choice, with the certitude of a bloody trial of strength between the two rival factions, both being resolutely intent to secure control of the administration at all costs. This spelt anarchy and civil war, to avoid which, the military stepped in between the combatants, before the latter were quite ready for the fray. It was neither greed nor ambition which had goaded the military on the high road of politics, but the consciousness that

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pressing need. The debasement it² had reached spurred Stoyan Mihailovski to castigate in biting satire this remissness of his otherwise over-energetic countrymen. In the epilogue of one of his remarkable books "From Debasement to Dissolution," in which he depicts in masterly fashion the turpitude prevalent among the leading political circles at the time, he identifies the Bulgarian people with an ass, which animal he addresses as follows: "Thou shalt remain to the end a donkey. Such is the decree of providence. Thou shalt serve as an example to other animals, when they perceive thee, they will understand what moral deformity is, and they will guard themselves from such debasement. Do not ask me to flatter thee, for if I were to say in an apologue, that thou art a deft, clever sweet-voiced animal, common folk would begin to make fun of me, and would say that I too am an ass."

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The above outburst should not be taken too literally¹, and patriotic Bulgarians need not feel uncomfortable. Let

¹ The state of public affairs in neighbouring countries does certainly not warrant one to conclude that other Balkan countries have reached a higher level, though they were enfranchised long before the Bulgarians. A few years ago a public scandal was caused in Greece by the discovery that the quinine supplied by the Government, (this being a State monopoly) was nothing but an inoffensive powder. This had gone on for a couple of years. A fifth of the population is affected by malaria and one can easily surmise the likely consequences on public health. Some personal friends and prominent supporters of M. Venizelos, were implicated a fact which corroborates the latter's explanation (made in private) as to his loss of popularity in Greece, namely that he was surrounded by a gang of depredators who had compromised his administration. Conditions in Rumania are incomparably worse, and the spoliation foreigners are subjected to beggar description. Arbitrary invalidation of contracts and seizure of property are common grievances and the "Times" did not hesitate to qualify these proceedings as piratical, when the property of a British concern, that of the Galatz Water Supply Co. was thus summarily treated. Some two years ago the present writer published a book on Rumania, with the object of putting investors and

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641 There are few such morally refreshing writings on Bulgarian politics as the opening chapters of M. T. G. Vlaikov's book "Functionaries and Rulers" in which the self-sacrificing efforts and the devotion of the freshly appointed civil servants in the newly liberated Bulgaria are depicted. Touching incidents are related which illustrate the high pitch of patriotism and sense of public spirit then prevailing among the more educated classes, who hastened at the time to abandon lucrative professions in order to assume public functions, because there were no other persons capable of carrying on the work of administering the country. If the blight of politics has succeeded in perverting such austere and exemplary virtues, the removal of the baneful influence politicians have so far exerted, may equally result, under proper guidance, in a reversion to the simplicity and austerity which characterised the first appearance on the political stage of their country of the passing generation of Bulgarian public men. Easy is the descent into Avernus, while the path leading to virtue is steep and beset with obstacles, nevertheless when its existence is known, and has been trodden before, there is some hope that it may be travelled on again.

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• 661 Since the discarding of democratic forms of government on May 19, 1934 this stupendous problem, on the satisfactory solution of which will depend the success or failure of the new system of government, has only received superficial treatment. The Gheorghiev Government was absorbed in other more pressing matters, and it only issued a decree inflicting draconian sanctions on all public functionaries involved in peculation. A radical overhauling and simplification of the bureaucratic machinery is the most pressing problem at the present time and it remains with M. Gheor-

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647 ghiev's successors to grapple with it and destroy root and
661 branch this foul growth which has so far poisoned public
life and undermined morals in the country. By their ability
to deal with this pressing question cabinets will be judged
and their fate decided. The urgency of the matter may be
gauged by the following illuminating article which appeared
in the *Mir* on November 24, 1933, and a summary of
which is given below:

[674] Official statistics show that criminality has increased from
426 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1910, to 631 in 1923 and to 726 in
1929. Crime has been much more frequent in the urban districts and
the class which has been most indicted, excluding that of people
without a fixed occupation, is that of State and municipal function-
aries. The percentage of crime among this category has been 470 per
100,000 in 1910, 751 in 1923, 1936 in 1926, 2169 in 1927, 1995 in
1928 and 1718 in 1929. The percentage of increase in crime for the
whole population between 1910 and 1929 has been 64%, while that
for public functionaries, has been 435% during the same period. In
1928, 22.6% of all crimes in Bulgaria had been committed by func-
tionaries of the State or of municipalities (excluding officials in the
railway and post-office administrations, whose misdeeds if accounted
for would have further increased this figure of 22.6%) and it becomes
obvious that our functionaries are corrupt to a frightful extent. The
causes are not only the bad economic conditions, but also our poli-
tical manners.

When a manager of an autonomous institute appoints capable
and fit persons in possession of the required training prescribed by
the regulations, the Minister in charge dismisses them and appoints
in their stead his partisans. Inculpated functionaries who ought to be
dismissed and arraigned before a court are maintained and even
promoted if they belong to the same party as the Minister in charge.

Instability in tenure of office must equally tend to
render officials remiss in their functions, there is no
incitement for them to display zeal since they know that
they will be evicted as soon as their party is driven from
power. According to a statistical table prepared in 1911,
the average period of service of State functionaries was
only seven and a half years. Out of a total number of

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49,683 officials, only 830 had served thirty-one years and over.

A former Minister, M. Madjarov, writing in the *Mir* on October 11, 1934, affirmed that the reason for the increased corruption among functionaries is that the culprits are not found out. The fear of punishment is no longer a deterrent when 90% of the delinquents are not discovered. The well known author, M. T. Vultchev, also wrote on this theme in the *Mir* on October 30, 1933. He opined that the economic crisis was intensified owing to the vices of the administration, and cited in support an article published by a functionary who enlarged on the losses caused to the exchequer through the lack of control and the non-application of fiscal decrees by mayors and functionaries when they were dealing with their partisans. Even conscientious functionaries can not proceed to collect such taxes as are due by partisans of those in power for fear of being dismissed. In February 1934, the organ of certain functionaries in the Finance Ministry, the *Finansova Zastita*, wrote saying that excise controllers were hindered from doing their duty by the partisans of those who were in power and that consequently contraband was increasing. The *Mir* on November 17, 1933 affirmed that financial inspectors had ascertained that during the preceding seven months malversations amounting to 500 million leva had taken place. The *Sofitska Tribuna* on October 14, 1933 revealed in full detail how the excise had been defrauded of some 2 million leva at Burgas through the complicity of certain State functionaries. The *Nared* on August 1933 reported that a certain sugar refinery was owing 134 million leva to the State, but that with the collusion of certain influential deputies this debt would be written off. The loss to the Bulgarian Exchequer through the pandering to the wishes and whims of partisans had attained tremendous figures. The former

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Minister of Finance, Stefanov, stated in the Sobranie on June 17, 1932 that in 1930 there were 2800 million leva of uncollected taxes, 75% of which could have been duly collected by the authorities if they had properly attended to their duties! The culpable remissness of the authorities has thus had two results, the disorganisation of public finances and the corruption of the public service.

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The bureaucracy is not a native institution. It was set up and organised by the Russians and has inherited all the defects and corruption of its prototype.

M. Symeon Radev, in his most informative work „Creators of Contemporary Bulgaria“, pp. 114/5 cited some instances of the deplorable example of corruption set up by the first Russian administrators in Bulgaria. The Russian commissary, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, farmed out the tithe to a Frenchman at a price, which was reported later by the financial authorities as derisively low. According to the contract, the Frenchman bound himself to pay as an advance 3 million gold francs, but this sum was never accounted for in the State accounts, it had simply been pocketed by the Prince.

In connection with this contract it had been reckoned that there ought to be in the Government warehouses 290,000 bags of wheat and 100,000 bags of other cereals, but when the stock came to be checked, some 100,000 bags were missing. The financial official could get no satisfactory explanation from the Russian authorities in charge, and this colossal robbery had to be passed over in silence.

In Tsarist Russia, the functionary considered himself as all important, a very delegate of the almighty Tsar; he could take any liberty with the public, and the Russian organisers seem to have imported this spirit to their young Bulgarian colleagues. The latter being inexperienced and uncritical, readily assimilated these vices, believing

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The experience of an acquaintance who attempted to send a consignment of Bulgarian cigarettes to some relatives of the author's in Nigeria, is worth relating. He had to order special tin containers from England to hold the cigarettes. According to the existing customs regulations, all packing materials imported in the country and used as such for goods exported from Bulgaria pay no duty on entry. On the arrival of the tin containers an over-zealous official opined, that they were not, properly speaking, packing material, for they would themselves be packed in cases, and that therefore they were subject to duty. As the duty was prohibitive and amounted to a preposterous figure a petition was lodged with the Ministry of Commerce soliciting that a more liberal interpretation should be given to the existing law. Six months later the answer came, intimating that the matter was in the competence of the Finance Ministry. Another petition was then drafted and submitted. Another problem then arose, namely, which of the various departments in the Ministry was the competent one to deal with this subject. No one would assume responsibility. A whole year elapsed and finally the wiseacres in the Ministry decided that the Minister of Finance himself should cut the Gordian knot. But he too quaked before a matter of such stupendous importance, and he referred it to the Ministerial Council, which decided at last that the containers should be considered as packing material and be exempted from duty. Over a year and a half was needed to solve this complex problem, and in the meanwhile most of the tins had rusted and become useless. 647

These difficulties and obstacles one meets when dealing with organs of the administration are not due to mere red tape or to the proverbial bungling of the bureaucracy, they are often created purposely in order to embarrass, bewilder and paralyse the applicant and thus 647 661 •

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665 force him to have recourse to an intercessor, in important cases a deputy, whose services have to be remunerated, and who usually shares with the functionaries the spoils he has squeezed out of his hapless victim.

Thus we find D. Daskalov, July 18, 1928, an opposition deputy, declaring:

"Unparalleled chaos reigns in the Pension Administration. Pensioners living in the provinces have to employ and pay intercessors in order to have their affairs attended to and settled, in many instances and though all the necessary documents have been submitted, cases drag on for two or three years. I know of a teacher from Vidin, who after waiting for a whole year without obtaining satisfaction came specially to Sofia. On inquiring at the Pension Bureau he was told to call again in a week's time. When he retorted that he had specially come to Sofia for this matter and could not afford to wait, he was informed that such was the prevailing order and that it could not be changed."

A Government supporter, N. Padarev, then continued in the same strain:

"I know of an unfortunate widow with four children, whose pension book has been kept back for six months and not returned. Such a state of affairs is as inexcusable as it is unbearable."

G. T. Vlaikov, March 5, 1929, a supporter of the Government, after a long speech on the civil services related the following experience of a friend of his who had the greater part of his estate expropriated, and to whom a compensation of three million leva had been awarded. Though he was in urgent need of the money to pay his taxes and cultivate the remainder of his land, all his efforts to secure payment proved unavailing for eight years. At last he had recourse to an intercessor who demanded a commission of 12%, but finally he accepted 7%, and in a very short time the money was paid.

Another deputy, H. Baraliev, January 28, 1927, a supporter of the Government, discoursed on the lapses prevalent in the Financial administration. Income-tax declara-

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tions of wealthy and influential people went usually astray in tax collectors' offices. A committee of control had unearthed twenty such declarations in one tax-collector's office. A special commission had been appointed to examine the amount of taxes imposed at first hand, and in many instances had made undue reductions from millions to thousands. Obviously bribery had been resorted to. 647
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The name of a well known Gabrovo manufacturer was given whose tax had been assessed at 800,000 and the amount afterwards reduced to a very small sum. The committee of control was able to prove the partiality of the special commission but its report on these abuses had been kept back by a head of a department whose name was given. Cases of income-tax collectors who had absconded after appropriating public moneys were also cited, and M. Baraliev explained that unworthy individuals were being nominated as tax-collectors owing to their close relationship with those in power. In Sevlievo a conscientious financial inspector was removed from his post because he inflicted a fine on an influential partisan and the fine had not been collected. The services were being demoralised when dutiful men were reprimanded and unprincipled men protected.

Ts. Tabakov, March 14, 1929, an independent deputy, decried the custom of creating sinecures which are filled by partisans. There was not a single chancery where abuses were not committed, bribes openly received, and embezzlements in which the big bosses of the party were participating. Responsible posts were entrusted to unworthy persons.

Another opposition deputy, Dr. N. Dumanov, March 8, 1929 was yet more outspoken: "Our treatment of functionaries is criminal, we choose them mainly as pioneers in electoral struggles, and consequently nominate men who are not fit to serve as civil servants."

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And the following statement made by another Government deputy, V. Marinov, on September 8, 1926 is no devoid of humour owing to its extreme artlessness: „What God gives is for all, but the blessings which the State may confer are first for our kin. That is how we understand democracy. So it was yesterday, is to day and will be tomorrow. It is we deputies who intervene to dismiss or nominate officials. Why should some criticise the system when they did the same thing when in office.“

In the customs too, serious abuses occur, and the State loses millions every year by prevarications and collusions between customs officials and importers. One may secure illustrations of these shady transactions by perusal of a pamphlet recently published by a former customs official, C. S. Dobrudjaliev, and also in the above mentioned book of M. G. T. Vlaikov. This will explain the rocket-like ascension of certain commercial firms in Bulgaria. Such a practice is not only prejudicial to the State, which sees its revenues dwindle, but it is also devastating to the commercial community at large. Honest traders are being undersold and ruined by such unscrupulous competition.

Parliamentarism had become a travesty, and democratic institutions served as decoys to hoodwink the people and impose upon them. The public services were purposely demoralised in order that politicians should become the supreme dispensers of all power. Instead of appointing to public functions men suited by their accomplishment and training, servility became the best credential. Far from seeking to stabilise the civil services and render them immune to political influence, functionaries on the contrary were made to feel that both their appointment and promotion depended on the politicians. They therefore obeyed them in everything and looked up to them rather than after the interests of the State which they were supposed to serve.

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Another natural consequence was the undue multiplication of public functions in order to provide for an increase in the number of such docile retainers, who served to strengthen the politicians' hold on the State machinery. The increase in the personnel necessitated the finding of some additional occupation and this was secured by an undue complication of the administration. This too was to the advantage of the politician, it made him indispensable to his electors. The transaction of business in a Government office having been rendered as intricate and puzzling a procedure as possible, the average citizen was forced to resort to the services of a politician to settle such affairs. Political bosses made an easy living by the dispensation of such services, which were far from being gratuitous, and even public functionaries had often to compensate their patrons for the posts to which they had been appointed by sharing with them their meagre salaries.

This explains why, when conscientious deputies like G. Yurtov, who on February 22, 1927 remarked in the Sobranje that half of the functionaries could be dispensed with by simplifying the civil services, or when A. Kantardjiev (November 5, 1931) criticised the system and declared that Bulgaria had the greatest number of functionaries in proportion to her population, namely, 17 per 1000 inhabitants, while England, Switzerland and France had only 3½ to 7 per 1000 inhabitants, such remarks fell on deaf ears.

It may seem strange, yet it is among the higher strata of the bureaucracy that one finds its most perverted members; the rank and file, though wretchedly underpaid are on the whole honest and conscientious, which shows that if a more efficient control was exerted and stricter discipline imposed, the demoralising influence set by those at the top would cease. So far this was not attempted because the top layers of the bureaucracy were in the

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• 661 main recruited from the ranks of the politicians. Only twice have efforts been made to stabilise the civil services and put a stop to the abuses it was giving birth to. The first attempt was made in the early years of Tsar Ferdinand's reign and the initiative was due to the then Prime Minister, Dr Danev. But such a measure did not suit the views of the Crown, and the National Liberal party, which was next in office, hastened to rescind it with the approval of Ferdinand who refused to interfere when appealed to by several leading political leaders.

The second attempt was that made by M. Peter Todorov, which has already been mentioned.

000 It is easy to realise that when the Executive and the Legislature become bound by a community of private interests and either fails to control the other then Parliamentarism goes bankrupt. This is what has happened in European countries which have adopted Parliamentary institutions, with the exception of the Scandinavian countries, Holland and Switzerland where its proper functioning has been rendered possible owing to the citizen's high conception of his civil duties. Democratic government is the outcome of a long evolution and there is no room for blind imitation. It took some seven centuries to reach its present state of development in Great Britain, and even there, it is open to lively criticism. Dean Inge has defined modern democracy as "the organised plunder of minorities"; but even this constitutes a vast advance on the level attained in the Balkans where it is still at the stage of the organised plunder of the majorities, judging from the following striking deliverance of Mihailovski: "We are a predatory people... Bulgaria is divided into two halves which have adopted this *modus vivendi*: - one day the first half plunders the second half; the next day, the second half despoils the first". One should admit, however, that it is not reasonable to

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expect that in two generations new countries should tread the road to constitutional progress up to the point reached by England.

With the advent of an authoritative government this work of reform **should** be vigorously taken in hand, for those in power can no longer justify themselves by stating that they have their party attachments to satisfy. A radical simplification of the system should be aimed at, and drastic cuts should be applied. M. T. G. Vlaikov admitted (*Radical* March 8, 1929) that though the Liaptchev Government had assumed the obligation towards the League of Nations to reduce the number of functionaries by 10,000, nothing had been done. He further affirmed that directors of departments and superior officials hardly work more than two to three hours a day, and that out of every 12,000 public functionaries there are 1500 who do absolutely nothing and who nevertheless draw the biggest salaries. When the budget for the financial year 1934-5 came up for discussion, an open letter addressed to M. Stefanov, the Finance Minister, appeared in the *Mir* on March 21, 1934 from which it is worth citing the following remarks: "Excessive sums have been provided to defray travelling expenses, commissions etc, Functionaries who are delegated to participate at special conferences should not be entitled to receive additional emoluments. For instance, the Prime Minister who receives remuneration amounting to 665,000 leva a year, can surely afford to travel abroad in order to take up the defence of the country's interests there if this be necessary. Why should he be awarded a supplementary sum of 5000 or 6000 leva a day for this purpose? Other Cabinet Ministers receive 364,000 to 440,000 leva a year and they enjoy many other privileges. They travel in special railway cars and in State-owned automobiles, they even have free boxes at the National Theatre... My aim is to draw attention to the

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directors in the Ministries, to the "collaborators" of Ministers, those occupying 'key' posts. In certain departments one is impressed by the fact that there are no subordinate officials. All are directors or inspectors. It appears that every Minister on assuming office creates new posts for directors, and matters have reached such an extreme, that in the ministries only managers are installed, and there are no officials to attend to routine work. In the General Direction of Public Works, the Minister is surrounded by a jurisconsult, a general manager, twelve chiefs of sections, twenty six managing engineers and architects who receive monthly salaries of 6000 to 13000 leva. For the entire personnel of this institution a credit of seven millions a year is provided, out of which five millions are affected to the payment of emoluments of the higher members of the staff, who moreover are delegated to participate in conferences and therefore receive extra bonuses.

In the Directions of Public Health, and that of the Home Office, out of the affected credits of 1,976,400 and 1,784,400 leva some 1,200,000 and 1,484,000 are respectively assigned for the remuneration of the "directorates". In the Ministry of Finances out of the 16 million leva of expenditure voted for it, 12 are absorbed by the salaries of the higher staff and the real workers have to be content with the remaining 4 millions etc. It is these "directors" who inflate the budget. They constitute an intolerable burden because they do nothing and in most cases they come and go together with the Minister and the party which has appointed them, for on the whole they are altogether unfit for the posts they occupy. The Bulgarian administration does not require such "budgetivorous directors". Once upon a time each Ministry had only one secretary and the Ministers attended mostly singly to the affairs of the State. Minister Stefanov has

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declared that the crisis is now beginning for Bulgaria, curtail therefore M. Stefanov your emoluments and the number of your "directors" to the minimum etc".

According to the budget of 1934-5 the number of public functionaries was stated to be 88,000, but obviously without reckoning the supernumeraries. The Gheorghiev Cabinet revised the budget and in August 1934 the number had been restricted to 82,583. In 1908 there were only 35,920, so that there is yet ample scope for further reductions. In Greece, which has about the same population, the number of public servants numbered only 45,523¹) in 1930 and only 12% of the budget was charged with their remuneration. In Bulgaria, 35.15% of the budget for 1930-1 was earmarked for the wages of some 85,250 functionaries. The *Archive for Economics and Social Politics* in its second fascicule for 1933 contained the following table as to the numbers and salaries of the civil services for the year 1931-2.

DEPARTMENT	Number of functionaries	Total amount of salaries	% of total	Average salary per functionary
Supreme administration	674	33,447,000	1.1	49,625
Ministry for Foreign Affairs	2,750	82,886,000	2.8	30,140
" of Interior	9,858	247,943,000	8.5	25,151
" of Education	24,259	798,260,000	27.4	32,905
" of Finances	4,113	133,484,000	4.5	32,697
" of Justice	3,843	132,288,000	4.5	34,423
" of War	6,953	298,806,000	10.2	42,975
" of Commerce etc	1,833	69,837,000	2.4	39,099
" of Agriculture	4,432	151,144,000	5.2	34,103
" of Public Works	2,584	118,769,000	4.	45,963
" of Railways, Post & Telegraphs	6,800	203,228,000	7	29,886
Administration of Railways.	18,047	616,794,000	21.6	34,266
Commissariats for supervising Treaty.	8	486,000	0.1	60,780
Various funds	457	20,827,000	0.7	45,572
Total	86,611	2,908,198,000	100	Average annual salary 33,642

¹ This figure does not include railway employes who are not State functionaries in Greece.

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• 661 An accurate idea however, can not be formed by these figures, for while the hierarchy is well retributed, the lower grades are wretchedly paid and by averaging up the salaries as had been done above, one is likely to infer that the position of the public functionary is satisfactory, this unfortunately is far from being the case. The rank and file are miserably underpaid. Thus according to the figures available concerning the revised budget of 1934-1², out of 82,583 functionaries, plus the 26,189 volunteers employed in the army,

26,303	were receiving emoluments of 1000 leva and under a month,				
55,992	"	"	"	between 1030 and	1940
11,194	"	"	"	2020	2510
1,867	"	"	"	2590	2940
5,316	"	"	"	3020	3980
1,862	"	"	"	4050	4940

while the number of those drawing wages over 5,000 leva a month and rising to a maximum of 20,500 leva, which is the salary of a minister, was only 6,438, while the total sum in the budget affected to salaries amounted to 2,753,946,864 leva. Bulgarian critics are at one to point out that there is a plethora of public functionaries and that the better remunerated posts are really sinecures. It is imperative to reduce the number of functionaries not for the purpose of effecting economies, but in order to increase by the saving thus made the salaries of those who remain, since the State has no other resources from which to retribute the services of its servants adequately. How can a functionary with a family in Sofia, live on a monthly salary of 2000 or 3000 leva, when he needs at least 1000 to 1500 leva a month for rent alone? Is it surprising if he tries to supplement his scanty salary by devious ways since it does not suffice to keep him alive? M. Vlasakov writing in the *Mir* on June 13, 1933 stated that between 1925 and 1932 in those State departments the

7 [Errata: should be 1934-5. —Analyst]

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accounts of which have been controlled by financial inspectors, it was found that 435,792,881 leva of public money had been misappropriated. He further affirmed that for the last 15 years not a single custom-house, tax-paying office, excise office or industrial enterprise had its accounts properly audited, and if they were subjected to a strict inspection the number of discoveries of peculations which would ensue would be astounding.

What is needed above all is a simplification of the system which can surely be easily attained, for up to the present those in power aimed at complicating the State machine in order to justify the creation of more posts for their adherents. The semi-military government now in power is not handicapped by such an incubus and it is to be hoped that its sense of duty and patriotism will give power to its elbow to carry out this indispensable reform. Should it succeed in carrying this through it will have deserved the undying gratitude of its fellow-citizens.

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457 "Russia has renounced her 80 millions we owed her. The masses of the nation desire the complete writing off of all the other State loans".

Another well known deputy M. P. N. Dackalov followed by stating that Bulgaria had already paid two milliard gold francs on behalf of reparations and this was bleeding Bulgaria white. He also denounced the insincerity of the former Minister of Finances, M. Mollov, who at Geneva represented Bulgaria's position as financially good and her budgets as showing surpluses, while at the same time he sent delegates to Paris to show that the contrary was the case. To ease the atmosphere, M. Stefanov, the Minister of Finance, then got up and stated: that Sir Arthur Salter in his report recommended that the loan to the refugees should not exceed 600,000 to 650,000 leva, but every effort was made to increase the total of the loan for which increase there was no justification whatever and this led to the demand for the revalorisation of the pre-war loans. This was confirmed on another occasion by Prof. G. P. Ghenov in the Sobranie on May 16, 1932 who asserted that if the Government had had the courage to reject the Refugee loan, the revalorisation of Bulgaria's pre-war loans would have never been imposed.

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661 From the above it becomes evident that the Financial Committee of the League of Nations did not act impartially and that it committed an act of favouritism on behalf of the holders of the Bulgarian pre-war loans and grossly prejudiced thereby the interests of the subscribers of these Bulgarian League of Nations' loans floated at its recommendation and under its auspices. There is no doubt that certain members of the Liaptchev Government, which was in power from 1926 to 1931 are also largely to blame for what has occurred and they were overtly accused of benefitting by these transactions, thus deputy T. Tonkov on May 14, 1932 did not hesitate to in-

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terpellate M. Mollov in the Sobranye in the following terms which can hardly be considered as equivocal: 457
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"I do not know whether you used the proceeds of these loans to establish yourself or the refugees for the latter still live in huts".

As for the Government's responsibility in saddling Bulgaria with this onerous arrangement, Dr. Beshkov declared on April 20, 1932 in the Sobranye that Liaptchev and Burov were to blame for agreeing in 1926 to reimburse the pre-war loans in gold instead of in paper francs.

When such an example of gross spoliation was set at the top by those who were supposed to supervise and control the funds raised on behalf of the refugees we need not feel suprised that lesser officials manifested little zeal in practising economy and preventing embezzlements. Obviously, the borrowers were encouraged to have a few years of artificial prosperity in order to forget the bitterness engendered by the imposition of such onerous clauses.

Thus in July 1933 the Bulgarian Press cited the names of certain architects and engineers employed by the State in supervising the settlement of the refugees, of having embezzled some 15,000,000 leva, and it was further stressed that out of the construction of 264 houses built at Kavacli for housing the refugees some 5 millions had been misappropriated by them. These malversations were first denounced by M. Vlassakov, a courageous outspoken journalist, and he continued his campaign of denunciation in the *Mir* in spite of M. Charron's (the League of Nations' delegate in Bulgaria) efforts to hush up the matter, and the menaces and threats of the incriminated parties. For a time he was even prevailed upon by official circles to cease writing as he was assured that a commission of inquiry had been appointed to examine into these peculations, but as little was done and the

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culprits remained as active as before, he returned to the charge and continued his exposures. He affirms that over 18,000,000 leva were embezzled by two persons alone who had issued paying orders without adequate justification.

Another revelation as to the improper use of the money provided by the Refugee loan was made by the "Radical" December 6, 1932. This paper being the mouthpiece of M. Kosturkov, former minister of railways, was qualified to know how matters stood. 300 millions from the proceeds of the Refugee Loan were earmarked for the construction of the Rakovski-Mastanli railway but a large part was dissipated in a spirit of levity that illustrates the utter disregard shown by the Liaptchev administration for the obligations it assumed in formal protocols to private creditors. It shows at the same time to what extent M. Kosturkov was vigilant and anxious to cut down expenses in his department. In this he holds a record, for in the two years of his administration he reduced its expenditure by 500 millions. It was his parsimony and scrupulousness which incited his more profligate colleagues to organise the political cabal which caused his overthrow and brought just and swift retribution in the coup d'état of May 19, 1934. Thus the paper stated: "The bridge over the river Arda cost 10 millions while the one over the Sutliika though one fourth the size cost 9,800,000 leva. The discrepancy was due to the bad administration of the Democratic Entente, this will also explain why this railway line is the most expensive one in Bulgaria, costing 4,150,000 leva per kilometer". What many of us will resent even more than the improper use of our money was that the houses destined for the refugees were very badly built and M. Vlassakov in one of his numerous articles in the *Mir*, August, 1, 1933, affirmed that in the Burgas districts hundreds of thousands of leva had to be spent on repairing these houses within

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a year of their termination, as 20% to 50% of the bricks employed in their construction were of too inferior a quality. And these imputations levelled by M. Vlassakov as to the bad housing of the refugees are well founded for deputy N. Traikov speaking in the Sobranie on March 17, 1932, complained that though these houses cost each 35,000 leva they were badly built, and the people cannot stand erect in them.

What speaks volumes for the honesty of the masses and contrasts strongly with the behaviour of its leaders is that the refugees to whom this deputy refers after complaining to him of their difficulties, of the impossibility of refunding the cost of their lands and homes to the government, expressed their readiness to evacuate them. For the lands and houses were not presented free to the refugees, but were to be bought by them on easy instalments, the State retaining a mortgage on them until fully reimbursed. The sums thus obtained are to serve for the reimbursement of the loan. By August 31, 1934 the sum of 20,203,733 leva had been reimbursed by the refugees; it is owing to the drop in the value of agricultural produce that proceeds from this head have been so scanty. Some of the funds set aside for the establishment of refugees were specially ear-marked for the draining of marshes, for Bulgaria had not sufficient land to provide for all their requirements. Apparently certain sums so destined were most uneconomically employed, provoking the righteous indignation of a talented deputy, who in his much commented and appreciated book "Among the people" wrote as follows on the subject (p. 64):

The authority in charge of the settlement of refugees has bragged a lot about its efforts to drain the Indjekoy marsh (near Mesembria) and proclaiming that it had thus reclaimed a vast tract of land. In fact $\frac{1}{4}$ of this area was grazing land equally as valuable as the arable land into which it will now be converted; as to the remaining part, it is below sea level and without resorting to pumping

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it will remain a marsh. For the conversion of this area of 1000—1200 hectares from pasturage to arable land, 15 million leva¹ have been spent, or 15,000 leva per hectare! (the price of arable land, is less than half this figure in Bulgaria), as to the annual cost of maintaining the drains, the future alone will enlighten us. But this is not all! In order that the cattle of the future settlers may be led to pasture, six huge concrete bridges each capable of sustaining a load of twenty tons were constructed. Will they start breeding Brobdignagian cattle in these newly opened lands, or is it in tanks that they will transport their harvest? — six bridges costing six million leva. If this is not waste I do not know what else it may be called. At a short distance, all in a group, six colossal bridges, while along the whole lower course of the Kamtsia, that of the Taka Dere and the Karabounar river there is not a single bridge, so that whole districts remain isolated, as if in foreign territory. Thus insensately millions out of this much advertised refugee loan have been dispersed. Let us pray these millions will soon be exhausted in order that these mad acts may also cease."

In the face of these facts are not American and British bondholders entitled to call to account the Financial Committee of the League of Nations and to ask for an explanation not only of their own behaviour but of that of their delegate in Bulgaria, M. Charron, who apparently was too engrossed in contemplating the natural beauties of that country while rolling along in his luxurious Mercedes car, provided as M. Muchanov stated at the cost of some 700,000—800,000 leva out of the moneys subscribed by the bondholders of the Refugee loan?

The debates in the Sobranye on the so-called Stabilisation Loan raised in 1928 reveal that the same policy of exploiting the difficult position Bulgaria was in continued, naturally with the connivance of the same ministers and in spite of public opinion, as far this may be ascertained in Bulgaria, which was decidedly against the conclusion of the loan, as it could be clearly foreseen

¹ This is an underestimate, according to an official report dated March 24, 1933 the sum expended on draining this marsh was 19,230,866.

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that it would bring no relief, but that on the contrary it would only involve fresh burdens for the country. The triumvirate, Liaptchev-Mollov-Burov which was in charge of the government had come to the conclusion that the more commercial and private debts Bulgaria concluded the better, for they would certainly get precedence over the political, and that the payment of the latter would be suspended in order that Bulgaria might pay the former. It was thus good policy to run into debt in order to avoid paying indemnities, and in the meantime Bulgaria in her turn had the satisfaction of squeezing something out of her exploiters. It was an astute deal, and the disappointment and loss subsequently inflicted on the financiers who undertook the underwriting of these loans was fully deserved by them. What one regrets is the small investor who fell a victim to the intrigues and cupidity of these two rival camps of astuteness and rascality. When taken subsequently to task in the Sobranye for his financial policy, the late M. Liaptchev attempted to vindicate himself by hinting that default on a large scale would ensue, thus turning to his successor in office, M. Muchanov he made this illuminating remark:

"There will be no loss to Bulgaria. The Prime Minister affirmed in the Committee of Foreign Affairs that he would buy up all the bonds of these two loans for 500 millions. Is it not so M. le President?"

M. Muchanov's answer is not recorded in the Parliamentary minutes (Sept. 6, 1932), evidently it was not politic to dilate on such a thorny matter for. . . "taisez vous, mefiez vous, les oreilles ennemies vous écoutent!"

British investors who subscribed to these loans did so because they inferred that their Government which was represented on the Council of the League of Nations which had approved them, had likewise done so. Their savings were supposed to be safeguarded from improper

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137 An interesting paper was read by M. Taslakov in February 1933 at a meeting of the Society of Bulgarian Economists, from which the following data are worth quoting: 35% of the timberlands consisted of heavy forests and 65% of scrub forests. From the former an annual yield of 1,008,000 cubic metres of prepared timber for building purposes could be secured, the price of which was 2000 leva per c. m. or some 907,200,000 leva, while the output from the latter would amount to 2,600,000 c. m. fit only for fuel and priced at 125 leva and would attain 325,000,000 leva. The revenue from forests would therefore reach 1,232,200,000 leva per annum,

The forests contained 50% oak, 25% beech, and 25% various conifers. The annual arboreal growth per hectare of beech was 3.6 c. m., of oak 2.8 c. m. and of the conifers 6.2 to 6.6 c. m. The total arboreal growth available for felling would be estimated at 10,294,380 c. m., half of which would cover the local requirements and the balance would be available for export.

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661 There is another highly interesting book on Bulgarian silviculture by M. Ch. Gruev, who was a forester and consequently fully qualified to write on the subject. His exposures of the abuses committed by successive Governments in the administration of forests, constitute a most damning indictment of the pseudo-democratic form of government so far extant and show to what extent politicians are responsible for the annihilation of the forests and how they contributed in demoralising the people by their cynical disregard of the law. The only conscientious Minister in the charge of the forest domains were D. Christov, who was a member of the Gueshov Cabinet during 1911-1912 and the Agrarian leader Draghiev. He speaks highly also of Stambulov who passed excellent measures to preserve the forests, but unfortunately under his successor, Stoilov, everything was undone. He nar-

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rates at length how the late Minister Ghenadiev ordered the forest guards to inform the population of the Batak region that whoever voted for his brother would be allotted several cubic metres of timber free of charge. The same Ghenadiev repaid his electors at Stanimaka by making them a present of the Tsepelare forests belonging to the State and worth many hundred millions. In order to secure his return at the elections of 1903 he allowed his intended electors to fell indiscriminately as many trees as they wished within his constituency and in order that they might not be prevented by the forest guards, who would have demurred at this patent violation of the forest regulations, he summoned temporarily most of them to Sofia pending the elections. Whenever a forester manifested some initiative and prevented adherents of the party in power from cutting down trees, he would at once be removed from his post. (p. 137-144). 313 661.

M. Liaptchev who succeeded Ghenadiev, is as violently taken to task. He is accused of preventing foresters accomplishing their duty and ordering them to let the people dispose freely of the forests until the elections were over in order to secure their votes for the Government. As a result entire forests were ruthlessly cut down, in the region of Varna, and these disafforested tracts are now known locally as Liaptchev's fields. (p. 172-3). He adds:

"But the most anarchic Government Bulgaria had seen was that of the Agrarians, it was characterised by the greatest corruption bribery became a system". (p. 267).

M. Gruev reveals astounding facts about the Agrarian Minister Obov, who completely demoralised the forestry personnel by acceding to all the solicitations of provincial deputies. All conscientious functionaries in the administration were dismissed or threatened with dismissal and ordered to shut their eyes to the abuses committed by Government supporters. Obov was perpetually pestered

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661 by feminine petitioners for grants of forest clearances. Some 4000 hectares of forests on the Danube islands were handed over to villagers in order to win their votes. 90 pseudo-co-operative societies were created to exploit the forests but they disappeared as if by a miracle as soon as the Agrarian regime fell on June 9, 1923. The Agrarians in short, had proved the greatest enemies of the forests. (p. 297-8). Unfortunately Minister I. Mollov, who took over this department after 1923 did not put a stop to the abuses, he dismissed the competent staff and nominated in its stead relatives and friends. (p. 326).

The above charges against the Agrarian regime are more than justified. A perusal of the minutes of the Sobranie reveal that several deputies impugned the Agrarians with extensive misuse of the authority they wielded when in office. Thus in the sitting of February 4 and 10, 1925, deputies related how in 1922 in order to win over 250 voters the Ministry had permitted them to cut down 6500 cubic metres of lumber, but not satisfied with this, these prospective supporters of the Government having a higher estimate of their value, proceeded to cut down 14000 cubic metres, and when the forester in charge protested, the local grandee had him arrested. The Agrarian Minister prior to the elections had openly incited the people to plunder they forests b asking „Who is the forester who dare prevent you from exploiting the forests which are yours“? Minister Obov had made a present of 46,000 hectares of forests, valued at 158 million leva to villages near Svistov and some 3800 hectares worth 175 millions to three other villages in order to secure their votes. Omartsevski who replaced Obov for a short time, disposed of some 120 hectares from the Ivanova forest in the same manner. On August 5, 1926 deputy Ts. Bratanov gave a further list of illicit felling of forests by the Agrarians whom he accused of destroying even part

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of the pine forest in the vicinity of Sofia with the intent of grabbing the timber. 313
661

With the re-appearance of the Agrarians in the Government presided over by M. Muchanov, the same methods were noticeable. Thus the „Burgaska Poshta“ of March 11 and 18, 1934 refers to extensive illicit felling of forests in the region of Aitos, the Plovdiv „Borba“ in April of the same year complains that the then Minister of Agriculture proceeded within 7 or 8 months to replace all the forest guards with his own partisans etc.

The aftermath of the devastation of the forests was a great deterioration of the climate as a result of erosion and denudation. The Journal of the Society of Bulgarian Economists for September 1933 published an article by M. Ts. Doutev, giving certain illuminating figures. The forest belt which in 1900 covered 32% of the country, had diminished to 27% in 1912 and to 19% in 1926. Observations gathered from 67 meteorological stations reported that while the annual rainfall averaged 820 litres in 1900, it had decreased to 690 in 1919 and to 490 in 1921. The more impressive figures were those of the stations at Yambol and Nova Zagora which had recorded in 1900 and 1921, of 818 and 364 respectively for the first, and of 825 and 530 litres for the second. The Maritsa basin recorded a rainfall of only 500 litres per sq. metre and this was the cause of the recent poor harvests.¹ An affluent of the river Maritsa, the Topolnitsa, which had a flow of 700 to 800 litres per second, now had only 250 to 300, and this falling off could be traced to the destruction of the forests in its catchment area. M. Doutev demanded that the Sylvan administration should be freed from political in- 313
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¹ M. D. Christov, a former Minister of Agriculture declared in the Sobranie on December 11, 1928 that the rainfall in North Bulgaria averaged 600 to 650 litres per sq. metre while in the Plovdiv district it was only 500 litres.

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653 rendering the working of the line more costly than it need have been. According to the data furnished by this author, of the 2,205 km. existing in 1919, 26.30% were level, 46% with gradients varying between 1 and 10 per % and 27.6% with gradients over 10 per %. The existence of so many steep gradients of more than 10% in the net work is surprising, for even in Switzerland, the most mountainous country in Europe, the percentage of such gradients was only 20.4% as compared with 27.6% in Bulgaria, while in Rumania the percentage is only 7.2%. The part of the network which has mainly contributed to increase this disadvantage is the section Tirnovo-St. Zagora which traverses the Balkans and which if it had been more carefully built could have proved of great value to the country since it could then have been utilised as an international trunk line, a function which in its present state it can not fulfil economically, as regards goods traffic, but can only compete for the carriage of passengers, and for the lighter and more valuable class of goods¹

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661 The history of this line is worth repeating as it illustrates to what extent politicians made light of their country's welfare and to what subterfuges and trickery they would have recourse to in order to further their own interests. The technical staff of the railway administration was utterly opposed to the construction of this trans-Balkan line in its present form. Their plan was to lay the line further east along the Haim Bogaz Pass, and this view was championed by the then Minister of Communications, M. Gatev, who was the only honest man in a cabinet composed of crooks, and presided over by an, arch-cynic Prime Minister, the late D. Petkov. The latter

¹ Deputy D. Nelkov stated on June 28, 1928 in the Sobranie: "This line was constructed against the advice of the most competent technicians, it has gradients of 30%, and its upkeep and utilisation cause an excessive outlay to the railway administration".

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and some of his supporters, among whom Minister Ghena-
 diev and deputy St. Popov of Trevna, being interested in
 some coal mine concessions in the Trevna district, wished
 that the intended railway should be deflected from the
 projected course which the technical staff had recom-
 mended so as to traverse the region where the mines
 were located, thus enabling them to dispose very advan-
 tageously of their concessions. As the change in the
 original plan would have impaired the carrying capacity of
 the line, and would have increased considerably the cost
 of construction, M. Gatev resolutely opposed the idea, and
 refused to yield on the point. In order to overcome his
 obstruction, Petkov hit on the expedient of sending him
 on a mission abroad and temporarily took charge of the
 Ministry of Railways. No sooner had M. Gatev departed,
 than Petkov submitted a Bill for the construction of the
 railway, with the desired modification and had the Bill
 carried post-haste by his subservient supporters or "boys"
 as they were familiarly termed by him. M. Gatev, as was
 to be expected of him, resigned as soon as he became
 acquainted with the trick which had been played on him,
 but Petkov remained nonplussed by the public disavowal
 inflicted on him by his colleague. He was wont to meet
 such happenings with such cynical outbursts: "I am so
 full of blots that a fresh stain will not show".

At any rate he was not the only Minister to line his
 pockets out of the railways. His immediate successors in
 1909 seem to have done remarkably well out of them.
 Dr. Sakarov, who until lately was the manager of the Ag-
 ricultural Bank, wrote in a booklet in which he criticised
 the doings of the Democratic party, that while one of
 their leaders declared in the Sobranyè on December,
 15, 1908, that the railway net exploited by the Oriental
 Railway Company in Southern Bulgaria was not worth
 more than 19,135,923 gold francs; this party which was

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499 again in power in 1909 paid as much as 42 millions for
 661 them, and that the person who supported this measure
 with the greatest warmth was Liaptchev. It would seem
 that his advocacy brought him a net gain of two millions,
 according to the testimony of M. Sakarov, who cites Mi-
 nister Pechev's „Memoirs“ in support. Obviously there
 was a margin of some 22 millions between the real value
 of the lines and what was paid for them, and there must
 have been others who shared M. Liaptchev's good fortune.
 That the price paid was outrageously high is self-evident
 since in 1898 the company had agreed to cede the whole
 network for 24,850,863 gold francs, but the transaction
 fell through owing to the inability of the then Government
 to conclude a loan. This was not the only occasion on
 which the railways provided for the staging of shady affairs.

The Finance Minister in the Stoilov Cabinet (1894—
 1899) thought it would be a clever expedient to construct
 parallel lines to those exploited by the Oriental Railway
 Company, and thereby force it to sell out at a low price.
 Apparently this financial genius was not at all perturbed
 by the expenditure which the construction of the parallel
 lines would entail, for the scheme was to serve as a pre-
 text to enrich his political friends. Judging from the
 discussions which followed in the Sobranye at the time,
 it would appear that several partisans of the Government
 had bought up land along the proposed lines and expected
 to make a very substantial profit by ceding it to the State.
 The proposal was carried through in spite of the protests
 of one of the Ministers, M. C. Veltchkov, who resigned. A
 legacy of this ill-considered policy is the line running north
 of the Maritsa, from Plovdiv to Tsrpan and Nova Zagora.
 Fortunately the section Plovdiv—Tatar Pazardjik was not
 built, but if this wild cat scheme was not proceeded with
 further, it is not their politicians the Bulgarian people have
 to thank but rather the foreign capitalists who would not

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499 furnish the means wherewith it could be carried out. Which
 661 shows that all financiers will not play the part of Mephis-
 tophelus to the Bulgarian Faust by tempting him with
 endless loans, as has happened quite recently and as holders of League of Nations' Loans have learnt to their loss. This whimsical scheme caused the fall of the Stoilov Cabinet in 1899 and was mainly brought about by the intervention of Ferdinand who overtly accused his Finance Minister of realising seven million leva out of these dubious transactions. It must not be thought that Ferdinand was prompted in this act by a desire to safeguard from dilapidation the public purse. He must have certainly been coaxed on by the avidity of the Minister in question who probably wished to keep most of these seven millions for himself.

499 With regard to inter-Balkan communications, it may
 648 be said that all the palaver of the Balkan conferences has not led to any practical decision. The Bulgarian proposal for the construction of a bridge across the Danube at Rustchuk, to link up the Bulgarian and Rumanian railway system, has been repeatedly rejected by the Rumanians and it was only at the end of 1934 that they made a slight concession by acquiescing to the plying of a ferryboat between Rustchuk and Giurgiu. As navigation on the Danube is suspended during the winter and the level of the river varies very considerably when in spate, the utilisation of the ferry boat will only be possible for a few months in the year, and the advantages to be derived proportionately restricted. The Greeks too have not responded to the Bulgarian suggestion of linking up their railways through the valley of the Struma, though the Bulgarians are pushing on with the construction of a broad gauge railway which will shortly reach Gorna Djuma. The extension of this line to the Greek frontier is estimated as likely to cost 328.7 million leva. It is only the Yugoslav Government

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668 guarantee certain elementary human rights, the enjoyment of which the League of Nations has never attempted to secure for these minorities.

At the elections of 1931, in spite of the fact that the Communist party had been outlawed and the endless persecution it was exposed to, yet it succeeded in sending 12% of the deputies elected to the Sobranie camouflaged as working men.

The extreme wretchedness of the bulk of the nation and the mass of destitute refugees have created new foci for Communist proselytism, and the country is to-day literally honeycombed with Bolshevism which only awaits a favourable opportunity to break out. Until quite recently, Communism was openly professed to be the coming form of government, and both peasant families and bourgeois, hastened alike to enroll officially some of their members in this party in order to secure an eventual protector on its advent which was considered imminent.

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648 Having with the support of the united Opposition got rid of the man who brought him to Bulgaria and who consolidated his throne, and having in turn made use of its services in order to reconcile himself with Russia, Ferdinand hastened to sow discord and suspicion among the members of the Stoilov Cabinet, so as to get rid of them now that with their help he had achieved his purpose. He thus intrigued against Gueshov, Madjarov and Stoilov, complaining alternatively to each of his other colleagues, using insinuations, slander and insult.¹

In 1899 Grekov was entrusted with the formation of a new Ministry with the support of the Radoslavovists who far outnumbered his adherents. At the elections the Rado-

¹ Cf. V. T. Velichev's: "Pages of our new political history".

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slavovists secured a big majority and they insisted on Radoslavov becoming Prime Minister. Ferdinand however, in order to disunite the party insisted and obtained the nomination of Todor Ivantsev to the post. This administration was characterised by the boisterous atmosphere it created both internally and externally. By its financial measures it provoked the peasantry to revolt, while in its foreign relations, Bulgaria was involved in a very severe conflict with Rumania which brought the two countries to the verge of war. The dispute arose through the activities of the Macedonians in Rumania. They murdered in Bucarest a Rumanian propaganda agent who worked in Macedonia against the Bulgaro-Macedonians. Another incident provoked by these same Macedonians intensified the dispute. In order to raise funds for their revolutionary campaign in Macedonia they rifled the safe of a wealthy Rumanian, but were unable to utilise the stolen banknotes and bonds in Rumania. They then hit on an ingenious though sacrilegious device for smuggling their booty out of the country. They approached the Bulgarian Government and persuaded it that it was highly desirable that the remains of the revolutionary Rakovski which were lying in Bucarest should be transported and interred in Bulgaria. This demand when formulated by the Bulgarian authorities was readily conceded by the Rumanian Government. The Macedonians hid in the coffin under the remains of Rakovski the stolen valuables and safely transferred them to Bulgaria, whence they attempted to negotiate them, but were found out by the police and arrested. The Bulgarian Government, by refunding the amount involved, finally put an end to the incident.

Early in 1901 this Ministry was dismissed, and Ferdinand confided to General Ratso Petrov the task of supervising the holding of elections in order that a new

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- 661 government should be formed. Petrov attempted to form a party of his own, but his right hand man, Yovev, became compromised in a shady affair together with other would-be supporters who had organised the emission of spurious revenue stamps and the evolution of this highly „progressive“ party was thus nipped in the bud. Thus unable to elect his own men, Petrov thought it expedient to allow full liberty to his opponents, and for once free elections were held in Bulgaria. They resulted in the formation of a coalition government composed of the followers of Karavelov and Danev, the two most numerous parties. Owing to the opposition which the projected creation of a tobacco monopoly aroused, Karavelov resigned and Danev assumed sole control after holding fresh elections which secured for him a majority in the Sobranie. He instituted proceedings against the Radoslavov administration and secured the condemnation of Radoslavov and of several of his colleagues for the abuses they committed during their short term of office. He enacted a law guaranteeing stability in the tenure of office for public functionaries, a measure which had it been maintained would have rendered the parliamentary regime operative in Bulgaria by eliminating most of the disadvantages it otherwise gave rise to.

648 During Danev's tenure of office, a military convention was signed with Russia in 1902, clearly defined as a counter measure to the one concluded between Austria-Hungary and Rumania in 1901. It was stipulated that the convention was not aimed against any other State save the above two, Russia guaranteed the integrity of Bulgarian territory and Bulgaria agreed that the Commander-in-chief, and chief of the general staff, of the Bulgarian army, would be nominated with the approval of the Tsar, while a Russian staff officer would be attached to every Bulgarian army corps.

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At the request of Ferdinand, the new Sobranie hastened to vote an amnesty, exonerating Radoslavov and his colleagues of the delinquencies for which they had been condemned. Hardly had the elections taken place than a revolution broke out in Macedonia. Measures had been taken by the Powers to introduce certain reforms in Macedonia and by 1903 the Sultan appointed Hilmi Pasha as inspector-General. These concessions made by the Turks brought no amelioration and in July 1903 the Macedonians rose in revolt, in the hope of forcing the hand of Europe for they were conscious that without outside support they stood no chance against the Turks. This decision was taken by the revolutionaries in the absence, and against the desire, of the great Macedonian chief, Gotse Delchev, who considered such an insurrection as inopportune. Some 12000 Macedonians and 2000 Thracians took up arms, and after obtaining certain initial successes were completely crushed by the Turkish troops. The outcome was that 201 villages and 12,444 houses were burnt, 4694 people killed, 70,835 rendered homeless, and 30,000 forced to seek shelter in Bulgaria. (Cf. Chr. Silianov: „The 1903 Revolution in Macedonia“). After this disaster, the Powers decided to impose the so-called Mürzsteg programme of reforms in Macedonia, which was divided into five zones each of which was placed under the surveillance of a great Power.

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The turmoil in the Turkish provinces provided an unprecedented opportunity to Ferdinand for indulging in his petty scheme of creating an enriched class on whose support he might count in exchange for the favours bestowed on them. Large orders for war material were placed, out of which the favourites of Ferdinand reaped big profits in the form of bribes or commissions. The chronicles of those years are filled with the echoes of a resounding affair known as the „Charles-Jean“ trial, which revealed the

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- 661 extensive malversations committed at the expense of the State by two favourites of Ferdinand, Generals Ratso Petrov and Michael Savov, who were however left to enjoy undisturbed their ill-gotten wealth. It could hardly be otherwise, for in this matter Ferdinand himself set the pace, as General Savov affirmed to a personal friend of the writer, Ferdinand always insisted on retaining for himself 90% of the bribes given whenever State loans or armament supplies were being negotiated, and only handed the balance of 10% for distribution among his Ministers. This princely practice was often complained of by the late Generalissimo of the Bulgarian armies, who found that the percentage allotted to him was not commensurate with his rank, and it is probably the stinginess of his sovereign that must have goaded General Savov to supplement this source of revenue by indulging in a series of embezzlements.

General Ratso Petrov became such an expert in the art of prevarication and collusion, that his achievements formed the subject of the ribald songs in vogue at the time. In one of them the General was described as making out of the horses supplied to the army a gold napoleon apiece, and out of every fortification erected on the frontiers of the country a prop for himself;

(„отъ конче — по наполеонче. А отъ всѣко укрѣпление — подкрѣпление“)

Misappropriation of public funds and speculation in connection with Government contracts were rampant. A premium was set on dishonesty by the knowledge that all crimes committed by supporters of the Government would eventually be reprieved by a timely amnesty voted by the Sobranie. Thus by widespread corruption, and by making promotion in the army and in the civil service conditional on the amount of servility displayed, Ferdinand succeeded to a large extent in rendering a numerous class subservient to his will. His success in this respect could be gau-

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- 661 ged by the rapid growth of the Bulgarian capital, which was built mainly by those who enriched themselves at the expense of the State. As Stoyan Mihailovski made one of his figures remark at the time:

„Do you see this pretty, coquettish Bulgarian capital? It is built out of plunder and robbery! Do you recollect what a dirty village it used to be some twenty-five years ago? Now it shines, it attracts like a Parisienne. . . Well, to me, it is a thousand times filthier, filthy in the purity of its atmosphere, foul in the cleanliness of its streets and courtyards, foul because it is a living proof that the history of young Bulgaria has begun by spoliation“.

The Stambulovist regime of 1903-8 was characterised not only by an orgy of peculation and abuse, but by a violent persecution of the Greek element throughout Bulgaria in 1906, organised mainly by Macedonian refugees at the instigation of the late Minister Ghenadiev. Greek churches, schools and property were ruthlessly seized and the town of Anghiallo completely destroyed. These pogroms were followed by a general strike of the railway men supported by other functionaries who went out on strike in order to force the government to improve the situation of its employees. The Socialists and students sided with the strikers with the result that rioting occurred, followed by student demonstrations against Ferdinand, who had to be appeased by the closing of the Sofia University and the dismissal of all its professors. The manifold misdeeds of the Government provoked widespread indignation. Stoyan Mihailovski foreseeing the deplorable trend politics were taking had appealed to Ferdinand, exhorting him to introduce real parliamentary methods in the governing of the country, but as his appeal remained unanswered he delivered a public address on March 7, 1904, emphasizing the necessity of bringing up the people democratically, and adjured the political parties to refuse to accept office direct from Ferdinand without previously obtaining the support of the electorate. His admonitions which were

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reinforced by the countless derelictions committed by the Government, brought about the creation of a strong coalition block composed of the greater part of the Opposition forces, which finally succeeded in bringing about the fall of the Stambulovist regime a few months after the assassination of the Prime Minister, Petkov in 1907. 661•

Except for the Macedonian revolution and the ensuing straining of Turco-Bulgarian relations, the only other event with regard to Bulgaria's foreign policy was the conclusion of an agreement with Serbia in 1905. Both countries feeling isolated while Russia was engaged in a war with Japan, sought to protect themselves mutually. Bulgaria facilitated the access of Serbian goods to the sea through her territory, and in exchange obtained a mitigation of Serbian propaganda in Macedonia. Austria-Hungary however, did not at all approve of this rapprochement between the two Balkan States and persuaded Serbia to abrogate the convention with Bulgaria in exchange for facilities for her imports of cattle in the Danubian monarchy. 648

Early in 1908 the Democratic party under Malinov, who had succeeded to the leadership after Karavelov's death, assumed power. This party though it formed part of the Opposition block, which had pledged itself not to accept office direct from the palace forgot all about this solemn pledge when it was invited to assume power. The most noteworthy occurrences during its stay in office were, the Young Turk revolution which was precipitated by the Anglo-Russian agreement at Reval, and the emergence of a nationalistic government in Turkey which stultified all efforts at a rapprochement between it and its Balkan neighbours. By their arrogant attitude and by threatening to incorporate anew both Bulgaria and Bosnia within the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turks forced Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria to concert together and decide on the formal annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria and on

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at war with Germany, Austria, Rumania and Turkey. In case Rumania or Turkey attacked Bulgaria, she was to be succoured by Russia. In the event of a successful war against Austria and Rumania, Russia bound herself to help Bulgaria to recover all the Dobrudja, in case of a war against Turkey, Bulgaria could count on Russia's support for securing territorial expansion within the limits fixed by the San Stefano Treaty. 648

In the beginning of 1910 Malinov visited Izvolsky at St. Petersburg and the negotiations were pursued. Malinov demanded the inclusion of Adrianople and Salonica within the territory claimed by Bulgaria. Izvolsky, while agreeing to the inclusion of Salonica, rejected the demand for a Bulgarian expansion to the east, and this caused a hitch in the negotiations which were not resumed. The Bulgarian Government desired that a date should be fixed for declaring war on Turkey as it could not wait indefinitely and see its co-nationals exterminated in Turkey. Russia however, was not prepared for a war in the near future and demanded that the moment should be chosen by her. The Malinov Cabinet simultaneously made efforts to come to an understanding with Greece and Serbia about Macedonia, but without any practical results. Serbia wished for its partition, while the Bulgarian Government aimed at merely securing autonomy for it. Subsequently, Ferdinand attempted to negotiate on his own accord with Austria, but as these dealings were violently denounced by Izvolsky in the Duma, they were discontinued.

Internally there was an improvement in the administration, though the partisan spirit was alway manifest. The Minister of the Interior, Takev, did not hesitate to tout electors with such promises as: "Vote for us and we shall give you free access to the forests to cut down as much timber as you like". An incident of small impor- 3661 •

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[During the administration of the Malinov Cabinet — Analyst]

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- 661 tance which occurred at Rustchuk in 1909 led to the army being ordered to fire and sabre the civilian population, over thirty innocent people being killed and a hundred wounded owing to the crazy orders issued by the Government. A strike which occurred on the Oriental Railways was taken advantage of by the Government to take over the lines in south Bulgaria and henceforth these were exploited in common with the State railways. The elevation of Bulgaria to the rank of a kingdom postulated certain alterations in the Constitution of the country which had to be legalised by an extraordinary Sobranye, and a coalition Cabinet presided over by Gueshov and Danev was entrusted with the task of convoking it. in the summer of 1911 in order to approve of the changes and simultaneously to concede to the King the right to conclude secret treaties with foreign States. This last measure was deemed necessary for a satisfactory conclusion of the negotiations the Balkan States were pursuing amongst themselves for the purpose of putting a stop to the persecution of their co-nationals in Turkey. For since the advent to power of the Young Turks who aimed at the forcible denationalisation of the Christians in Turkey, the lot of the latter had become intolerable and had convinced the rulers of the Balkan States that it was imperative to arrive at a common agreement whereby their interests might be properly safeguarded.

THE BALKAN ALLIANCE AND WARS

- 648 Bulgaria had always been a partisan of the indivisibility of Macedonia and as she was unable to annex it without coming to a clash with her neighbours, she staunchly supported the plan of creating an autonomous Macedonia in which the preponderance of the Bulgarian element would

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648 Vienna, which is recorded in the Bulgarian Orange Book (Document 735): „Even when the loan was advanced to you, it was understood that your policy would assume an unhesitating course“. A similar affirmation is ascribed to Radoslavov who assured the German ambassador in Sofia on July 15, 1914, after the voting of the loan, that the Cabinet felt itself secure and that it would begin to plan Bulgaria's attachment to the Triple Alliance. („Kautsky's documents vol I. p. 162). While Peter Todorov affirms:

„The political character of the financial assistance secured from German capital is emphasized by the instructions sent by our Finance Minister when he directed our Minister in Vienna (in 1913) to request the Austrian Banks not to charge more than 8% interest because the service rendered was also of a political character“. (op. cit. vol II p. 229).

• 661 The new Chamber¹ hastened to appoint a Parliamentary commission to inquire into the activities of the Gueshov and Danev Cabinets. The government accused them of being responsible of the misfortunes which befell Bulgaria in the late wars. This was clearly a clever ruse of Radoslavov aimed at discrediting his political opponents and curtailing their activities, for he himself being devoid of all popular support, was fearful lest his opponents by arousing the slumbering consciousness of the nation should come to dislodge him from office in which he was maintaining himself uniquely with the patronage of the Crown. Radoslavov was not even sure of all his supporters. The Stambulovists, comprising 28 deputies, and the second group in numbers supporting the Government, was headed by Ghenadiev, one of the most clever and unscrupulous politicians Bulgaria has had, who was playing a double game. The Stambulovists had been indicted for a series of illegalities committed by them while in office during the period 1903-8, and were awaiting trial. Radoslavov, whenever Ghenadiev showed any sign of resisting the pro-German policy which was being foisted on the Bul-

15 Elected in December 1913, see cat. 116,
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•661 garian people, used the expedient of intimidation and by threatening Ghenadiev and his friends that he would order the resumption of their trial, coerced them into submission with this handy weapon. This state trial eventually took place, and several Ministers, among whom were Generals Ratso Petrov and Savov, Gudev, Ghenadiev, Payakov, etc, were arraigned.

The most piquant fact revealed in its course was that the Finance Minister Payakov, in collusion with the delegate of the French bondholders in Bulgaria, Bousquet, ¹ whose mission was supposed to consist in looking after their interests, an employee in the French Legation, and the chief secretary of the Ministry, had conspired to defraud the Bulgarian exchequer. (T. G. Vlaikov, „Functionaries and Rulers.“ p. 135).

After the signing of the Treaty of Bucarest, Ferdinand did everything to foster the campaign of mutual recrimination which broke out among Bulgarian politicians each of whom endeavoured to ascribe to his adversaries the major part of responsibility for what had happened. After the loss of prestige he had suffered, Ferdinand grasped that his sole chance of maintaining himself on the

¹ There is nothing surprising in this, for the venality of the French politician does not lag behind that of his Bulgarian confrère; It may even be affirmed that the latter has simply copied the former. In the winter of 1934 some leading functionaries of the French Legation in Sofia were apprehended carrying on an extensive smuggling enterprise. Early in 1935, a former French Premier, Francois Marshall, was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for embezzlement, and Mr. Sisley Huddlestone, writing in the Contemporary Review about recent events in France, (January 1935) affirms: „the complacency and complicity of Ministers, of Deputies, of Senators, in crooked financial affairs, has been vastly increased., official or near-official connections and approval have made possible the career, of notorious swindlers. It has been shown that the police of the Sureté are involved. That there are lawyers who use their influence in Parliament to obtain immunity for their clients is amply proved“.

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• 661 throne lay in sowing discord among his subjects, and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to achieve this aim by encouraging mutual distrust and enmity both in political and military circles. He incited General Fitchev to murder General Savov, he upbraided Minister Ghenadiev for not permitting the murder of Minister T. Todorov, while he condemned the war Minister K. Naidenov for not arranging the assassination of Ghenadiev. (Protocols of State Trials pp. 596-601-979) While he thus set his politicians and officers by the ears, he applied himself to come to a close understanding with the Central Empires, these being the sole Powers which would condescend to support him in his morbid desire to wreak vengeance on Serbia and Russia, which in his imagination had dared interfere with the realisation of his ambitious aims. During the prolonged stay he made in Austria-Hungary in the autumn of 1913, it seems that the Emperor Francis-Joseph must have given him assurances that he would soon have an opportunity of retrieving his ill-luck. Ferdinand in exchange pledged himself to support the policy of the Central Powers. This accounts for his determination to persist in the pro-Austrian policy he had initiated, and in maintaining the Radoslavov Cabinet, the only one amenable to such a course, in spite of the repeated rebuffs it suffered when the electorate was consulted. On March 1, 1929, the *Mir* published an article signed by I. St. Gueshov, a former Bulgarian diplomat, who affirmed that in the autumn of 1913 Ferdinand at Vienna, and General Savov and Natsevitch at Constantinople, had promised Francis-Joseph, and the Grand Vizier, that whatever would happen, Bulgaria would support the Central Powers and Turkey, and Gueshov even affirms that draft treaties to this effect were signed. That the Emperor of Austria fully relied on these promises of Tsar Ferdinand becomes obvious from the handwritten letter the former addressed to the Kaiser

[i.e. Tsar Ferdinand — Analyst]

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Stambuliiski on his return from Neuilly was confronted with a serious situation. The Opposition parties at the end of December 1919 organised demonstrations against the Government, and certain parties fomented a general strike of the railway and telegraph officials which paralysed the transport service for two months. In order to curtail this agitation against his Government, Stambuliiski proceeded to dissolve the Chamber though its mandate had not yet lapsed and ordained new elections to be held on March 28. In spite of the intimidation and violence used by Government agents, only 38% of the votes cast were in favour of the Agrarians, and in order to obtain a fictitious majority in the new Chamber, the Government had to have recourse to the device of invalidating the election of certain Opposition deputies, but even this expedient only secured them a majority of two. The Agrarians who had already arraigned the members the Radoslavov Cabinet before a State Court for declaring war without consulting the Sobranye, and for their corrupt practices during their tenure of office, now decided to put out of action the rest of the Bourgeois parties. In order to impart an air of popularity to the prosecution a referendum was instituted as to whether the members of the Gueshov, Danev, and Malinov-Kosturkov Cabinets should be indicted or not, the former two for embarking on the Balkan Wars, and the last for not concluding a separate peace in time. This was an altogether arbitrary and unconstitutional procedure. The Balkan Alliance had been applauded at the time of its conclusion in the Sobranye by all, save M. Sakuzov, the Socialist leader, while the report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry clearly indicated that the responsibility for the second Balkan War weighed mainly on Tsar Ferdinand

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- 661 who issued the order to attack Bulgaria's quondam allies on June 29, 1913. As for the accusation brought against the Malinov-Kosturkov Ministry, it was simply preposterous, for they had not assumed office for the express purpose of concluding a separate peace, and no one had entrusted them with such a mandate. This last indictment did not lack a certain gusto, for some of the Agrarian Ministers in power had themselves written in 1917 to the Commander-in-chief advocating the continuation of the struggle on the side of Germany. Stambuliiski had recourse to the referendum in order to throw all blame for prosecuting his adversaries on the people, by pretending that the masses demanded their punishment. He further made it known that those electoral constituencies which would vote for the acquittal of these politicians would alone have to defray the costs of reparations imposed on Bulgaria by the Entente, and this naturally influenced the electorate to vote to the extent of two-thirds in favour of the ex-Ministers being tried for High Treason. As a consequence, the leaders of the Opposition were arrested in September 1922 and thrown into the Shumen prison, where they were confined under miserable conditions. Most of the legislation passed by the Agrarians, aimed at ruining or despoiling their political adversaries, and the details revealed by a perusal of the minutes of the Sobranye disclose an unparalleled brutality without the slightest trace of idealism to temper or redeem it, as is wont in the case of certain fanatical doctrinaires of certain political faiths, of whom it may at least be pleaded in extenuation that their discernment has been obscured by their extreme devotion to their creeds. It is true that the peasantry had been shamefully exploited by the urban classes, which had so far battered on their toil, but the remedy of this evil was not the committal of a greater and worse wrong, that of inflaming the lowest passions of the peasantry and letting them loose on the urban classes.

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As an example of the confiscatory legislation enacted 661 • the law allowing the State and Municipal bodies to expropriate any building may be cited. The law was made use of by the Agrarians to seize the property of their adversaries and to ruin them. Prof. Stainov, speaking in the Sobranie on March 17, 1924 gave details of a building in Gabrovo fetching an annual rent of 120,000 leva, which had been expropriated for merely 68,000, though the State immediately insured it for 500,000. An hotel at Shumen which had cost 8 millions had been expropriated for 370,000 leva, though the owners had been told that if they paid over 500,000 leva to the then Minister of the Interior (Al. Dimitrov,) the expropriation order would be rescinded. For the sake of an Agrarian partisan any building could be expropriated, concluded M. Stainov. The crowning injustice of this confiscatory measure was that a mortgage on such an expropriated building had still to be paid off by the original owner, as was explained by M. Madjarov in the same sitting of the Chamber. In fact, Agrarian deputies, such as Duparinov and Thomas Veltchev had unequivocally declared in the Sobranie: „The time has come for us to take from the rich whatever they have, after they had lived for forty years on the sweat of the people“. But robbery and spoliation was nothing in the face of the campaign of organised assassination and the deliberate policy of extermination of their adversaries pursued by the Agrarians. The application of such unjust laws and the disrespect of the rights of property they entailed, fostered communism. At the last elections held by the Agrarians in 1921, when the election of Communists was not hindered, the latter secured 21 % of the total poll, coming second after the Agrarians, who obtained 38 % of the total votes cast. The success of the Communists was remarkable in comparison with that of the Agrarians, for the latter held power, and this implies a great access of neutral votes.

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• 661 In Bulgaria a considerable number of constituencies invariably return Government nominees, such electoral divisions being mainly composed of Moslem or Jewish electors, whose chief aim is to secure a representative enjoying the Government's goodwill. For favouritism is so deep-seated in the State organism that an electoral district lacking a political intercessor can have little hope of receiving help from the State. The constituencies voting invariably for the Government are collectively designated by a very appropriate term, that of „the Government's dowry.“ If we deduct the number of votes representing the „dowry“ from the percentage accruing to the Agrarians, it would probably be found that the Communists polled more votes than the Government.

When in prison, Stambuliski had made the acquaintance of a certain Prudkin, whom he nominated as police prefect of Sofia. Prudkin set about to prepare outrages and plots in order to do away with the bourgeois politicians. The worst plot was that of the attempted blowing up of the Odeon theatre in Sofia, on March 3, 1920, when a Russian journalist intended to lecture, and at which it was known that Gueshov, Malinov, Liaptchev, T. Todorov and Burov would be present. The bombs exploded prematurely before the arrival of the ex-Ministers and only innocent people were killed and wounded and the Sobranye on April 23, 1926 had to vote pensions to some of the relatives of the victims. Prudkin had likewise attempted to blow up railway bridges, certain railway sidings, and to destroy the electric light installation of Sofia at the time of the big railway strike early in 1920, in order to compromise the strikers and justify the carrying out of retaliatory measures by the Agrarian Government. He likewise set bombs to explode at two churches in Sofia as was revealed in the Sobranye on June 26, 1924. Minister Pechev in his „Historical Events and Actors“, p. 719 records that when

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he was thrown into prison he came to know several criminals whom the Agrarians employed at times to murder or terrorise their political adversaries. The Agrarians would recompense them by granting them temporarily freedom and monetary gifts, but later they always arrested and executed them lest they should divulge the crimes they had been incited to commit. The Agrarians sought equally to circumscribe the influence of the Macedonians and accordingly had deputy Meltsankov and the Voivod Kotsanski assassinated, in retaliation for which the Agrarian Minister Al. Dimitrov was murdered on October 22, 1921. The late Minister Pechev also accused them of organising the murder of Alexander Grecov, the editor of the *Slovo*, and of a judge, for criticising and denouncing their crimes (op. cit. p. 377) and this was confirmed in the *Sobranje* by deputy G. Vassilev, May 26, 1924.

The Agrarian Ministers were nothing else but a gang of confirmed criminals ready to commit any crime. They quarrelled once among themselves and Al. Dimitrov, Stambuliiski and Stoyanov decided to assassinate their colleagues Manolov and Tomov. They set hired assassins to way-lay them while they were driving back from the mineral-bath establishment of Bankia. The assassins however, fired on the wrong car, and an innocent woman was killed instead. (Parliamentary minutes, June 26, 1924).

Having no partisans among the State functionaries they set about to nominate a vast number of new public servants wholly unfit for such an occupation and recruited from among the riff-raff of the population after offering their allegiance to the Agrarian organisation. Stambuliiski, not being oversure about the army set about organising an armed force recruited from among the peasantry. These so-called Orange guards were called out to oppose the Macedonians who had seized Kustendil on December 1922, for the purpose of dealing stern justice to some traitors

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- 661 to their cause. The Macedonians after carrying out their aim, dispersed within two days, the Orange guards, however, took advantage to plunder shops at Mezdra, Tserven-Breg and Sofia, and subsequently the Sobranye had to vote indemnities for the sufferers. Dr Rumenov described in the Sobranye on May 28, 1924, how the staff of the Alexandrovska hospital in Sofia, composed at the time mainly of Agrarian partisans, joined the pillaging bands and how they brought the loot to the hospital to divide it among themselves. Excepting those who derived directly some benefits from the spoils of office, all felt a profound aversion for the system introduced by Stambuliiski. Not only the urban classes, but even a section of the peasantry, the more independently minded and those less addicted to partisanship felt they had enough of it as may be inferred from the following resolution passed at the general congress of the Socialist party held in Sofia on September 1922.

"All labouring people feel crushed by the growing cost of living due to the remissness of the authorities who do nothing to check speculation. The Government is sunk in vice, crime and speculation and has provoked the aversion of all classes and professions. Stambuliiski's government represents the predatory instincts of an uncultured band of corrupt office seekers, bribed renegades and amnestied criminals. In order to maintain itself in power, the government is decided to resort to blood and fire. In order to crush every national movement, etc.

The Sofia population declares that it will continue its struggle and will not hesitate to sacrifice everything until this Government is overthrown".

Stambuliiski had a domineering and brutal temperament which brooked no opposition. He persecuted all outside the Communists, whom he called his "faithful hounds"; the Church, the army, the Macedonians, the political parties, the intellectuals and the mercantile classes. He owed his strength to his ability to pander to the lowest instincts of the peasantry and inflame them against the intellectuals and

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the officials, whom he denounced as social parasites. He hated and envied all who were his betters; he refused the admission of Intellectuals to the Agrarian party "because they could at a certain moment abandon it and go elsewhere", "we shall guard our union from that demoralising element, the barrister profession". Stambuliiski who had been supported by his wife while studying had a very poor opinion of the fair sex. He affirmed that:

"Marriage, woman and family are thralldom to man: a mass of heroes succumbs daily owing to their being led astray by woman, who may be likened to a veritable floating mine placed in the stream of life".

He earnestly believed that Europe had only two courses to follow, either to adopt Bolshevism or copy Agrarian Bulgaria. His self-complacency had apparently no bounds since he stated that:

"My profound belief is that the Bulgarian peasantry with its sane spirit of reform will set an example to great nations, which though they may possess a great economic culture are nevertheless very backward in political consciousness".

He certainly showed signs of unbalanced judgment in his last years. He proceeded to subsidise an Agrarian party newspaper in Bucarest, giving thereby offence to the Rumanian Government. He dispatched a certain Groskov to conduct secret pourparlers with Angora, arousing the suspicion of the British Government, which had not yet settled its differences with Kemalist Turkey; nominated relatives and acquaintances to the post of Ministers abroad who were utterly unfit for the missions entrusted to them etc. The one sensible idea he seemed to have at heart was that of working for a close understanding with Yugoslavia, but even this may have had an interested motive, for friendship with this country was incompatible with fraternisation with the Communists, and Stambuliiski had often declared that if he were ever forced to yield up

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• 661 the reins of power he would only hand them over to the
648 Communists, „my faithful hounds“, as he aptly styled
them. This open flirtation with the Soviets estranged him
from the more sensible leaders of the Green international
and this prevented him from heading this movement. When
the Bolsheviki were on the outskirts of Warsaw in the
summer of 1920, he became so elated at their success as
to remark to a group of intimate friends that it would not
be long before he would administer to the Entente the
lesson it deserved. In April 1923 it became known that
he contemplated celebrating his jubilee on August 30,
when an extraordinary congress of the Agrarian Union
was to be convoked for the purpose. In May he declared
that he was about to convene an extraordinary Sobranje
for the purpose of altering the Constitution and proclaiming
a republic. He withdrew secretly 100 million leva from
the Bulgarian National Bank for the pretended purpose
of bribing the members of the Reparation Commission at
Sofia and obtaining their consent. The threat of a repu-
bican move was taken advantage of by Stambuliski's
numerous opponents to persuade Tsar Boris to give his
consent to the overthrow of his too domineering Prime
Minister, and on June 9, 1923, the Agrarian regime was
unexpectedly overthrown, after Tsankov, Smilov and Ka-
zazov had obtained from Tsar Boris the signature of the
decrees appointing the new Government, (Cf. Gr. Tsesme-
djiev's „Rays of light on the mystery of the conspiracy“).

No one was averse to this consummation, and even
foreign governments made it known that they would
acquiesce in this move owing to the deplorable effects the
Agrarian regime was having on such foreign capital as was
invested in Bulgaria as well as on the public finances of
the country. In fact after the fall of the regime, criminal
proceedings were instituted against practically all the mem-
bers of the Agrarian Government, who were indicted for

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On the whole Tsankov had been faced with an extremely heavy task and although supported by one of the most intelligent Chambers Bulgaria had so far had, was not able to accomplish anything of importance. His activities were absorbed in creating a new party, suppressing revolts, tracking down conspirators and finally he took to limiting political rights and freedom when all pretence of idealism disappeared. In the foreign field Tsankov was equally unfortunate, in the hope of renewing commercial relations with Turkey he concluded a Treaty which was ratified on October 18, 1925 by which Bulgaria secured certain privileges for her exports, but these advantages proved illusory, for when the Treaty expired a year later the Turks refused to renew it and in the meanwhile Bulgaria had agreed to an exchange of populations abandoning to Turkey, property belonging to her nationals, valued at 10 milliard leva, which the Turks never paid for, as is their wont. Tsankov likewise attempted to win the friendship of Yugoslavia by paying a personal visit to Belgrade, but was not successful, for his Agrarian opponents who were hand in glove with the Yugoslav Government poisoned the atmosphere against him and rendered the conclusion of such ties nugatory. This flirtation with Yugoslavia does not seem to have met with the approval of Court circles and suddenly Tsankov was relegated to the post of president of the Sobranie and replaced early in January 1926 by Liaptchev, supported by Burov and Mollov, all three members of the Democratic Entente. Tsankov had been unjustly accused of introducing a regime of White Terror in Bulgaria; those mostly responsible for the brutalities which were certainly committed were his military supporters and advisers, General Vulkov, the Pa-

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ment of Corfu, General Pangalos would have certainly not formed the opinion that the League was a broken reed, and that in his turn he could bully disarmed Bulgaria.

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lace favourite, and General Russev, the Minister of the Interior. Impartial politicians in Bulgaria generally absolve Tsankov of this violence. Thus, M. Muchanov speaking in the Sobranye on April 1, 1926 stated:

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"1924 and 1925 were not normal years. Never before had we such internal unrest and such fratricidal struggles in Bulgaria. I understand the mentality of those who were administering the country at the time. In many cases they carried out their duty in a worthy manner, but at many places certain exaggerations occurred, but I personally, shall abstain from blaming the Minister of the Interior for these."

And the Radical leader Kosturkov, who was one of the most outspoken critics of the Tsankov administration equally admitted in the Sobranye on December 21, 1926: "The Tsankov Government had been provoked by the Agrarians and Communists and the blood it shed was in self-defence".

The advent of the Liaptchev administration coincided with the temporary exhaustion of the Agrarians and for some time relative tranquillity prevailed which permitted the Government to devote its attention to the pursuance of its financial programme and the raising of loans, which can hardly be said to have aided the country, as may be inferred from a perusal of the chapter devoted to the story of the League of Nation's loans.

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Another act by which this administration is likely to be remembered was the voting in 1929 of a large amnesty which included Radoslavov and Tontchev, rightly condemned by a State Court for violating the Constitution and facilitating Tsar Ferdinand's efforts to plunge Bulgaria into the war on the side of the Central Powers in opposition to the manifest desire of the people. The other colleagues of Radoslavov had already benefited from a previous amnesty, but public opinion at the time was utterly opposed to the inclusion in it of these two ex-Ministers. By granting an amnesty to these two discredited politicians who

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[cf. cat. 110, pp. 84-118 - Analyst]

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643 had stopped at no crime in order to further their nefarious designs, the Government dealt a heavy blow to the
697 prestige of Justice and undermined among the people confidence in law and morality. The real aim of the Government in passing this measure was to emancipate itself from the threat of finding itself placed in a minority through the defection of its more idealistically minded supporters, who very often disapproved of its policy. By winning over the partisans of Radoslavov by the grant of an amnesty to their leaders, the Government was hoping that it would ward off such a threat by eventually replacing their disgruntled followers by the Radoslavovists. Apparently the moral code of the trinity at the head of the government was not a very strict one as is manifest from the financial policy it foisted on the country and the liabilities it so lightheartedly assumed.

669 The commuting of punishments, and the granting of amnesties does not seem to have appeased either the Agrarians or the Communists, for towards the end of 1929 there was a distinct recrudescence in their activities. Armed bands penetrated from Yugoslavia and committed depredations and murders. A train was stopped and the passengers robbed, a number of judges were arrested and brutally shot near Sevlievo, the leader of the criminal band, responsible for these crimes, the notorious Dontso Uzunov, later took refuge in France, and though the Bulgarian Government applied for his extradition, this was refused on the pretext that the crime committed was of a political character. The Government and its supporters
661 paid little heed to the needs of the country, they were too intent on dividing among themselves the spoils of office. The booty was abundant, as it had been increased by the foreign loans recently concluded and there was enough for all their hungry followers. Millions were being showered upon prominent supporters of the Government

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who had been appointed to arbitrate in various disputes with contractors of public works or to various sinecures. 661 ●

The Socialist organ *Narod* in its issue of July 7, 1931 gives some samples of the profligacy of the Liaptchev Cabinet:

"In Albania where there is one Bulgarian school, a special inspector has been sent with a monthly salary of 20,000 leva. A special delegation was sent to the Budapest mint in order to supervise and receive the silver coins ordered there, though these coins could have been easily controlled on their delivery here. Ministers Burov and Mollov have wasted millions of public money in their endless peregrinations abroad, Minister Mollov even had his decorations sent to Geneva with a special messenger in order to put them on at an official banquet etc".

Another newspaper decried the practice of granting 200 Swiss francs per day to Government delegates sent on missions abroad when delegates of other nations receive much less. (Americans were said to be paid \$ 8, and Italians \$ 12 per diem) Opposition newspapers daily filled their columns with details of the prevailing corruption among government circles and laid stress on the utter apathy of Liaptchev as to the consequences. The latter was reported to have said in justification: "Our foreign creditors will be obliged to come and save their investments in Bulgaria, and then they will put our finances right".

The governmental structure had for some time been shaken by internal convulsions and dangerous fissures were making themselves visible. That political amalgam, the Democratic Entente, was slowly disintegrating into its heterogeneous component parts. The Liaptchev Cabinet was never a popular one; at the legislative elections held in 1927, it received a total of 495,000 votes against 556,000 given to the Opposition parties, but succeeded in getting 163 deputies elected as against the 86 obtained by the Opposition, owing to the latter being disunited, and owing 666

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more orthodox members of these two parties, the election pact concluded with the Agrarians and Liberals was looked at askance. There were even Radicals who seceded from their party rather than co-operate with the discredited Liberals, whose former leader was the abhorred Radoslavov. The views of the Agrarians on the now predominant economic questions coincided with those of the Radicals, while those of the Liberals were identical with the opinions of the Democrats. But there was another basic notion which radically separated Democrats and Radicals, from Agrarian and Liberals. The two former parties had a certain conception of their duties and at least made some efforts to govern decently and honestly, the latter two however, were out for loot and made no pretence about the aims which actuated them. The groups were too miscellaneous in origin, too self-seeking and rotten by private animosities and had neither the internal nor the external discipline required to make good their promises to the electorate. The post of Minister of Justice devolved on a Liberal and within a year there were grave complaints of his tampering with the course of Justice, formulated by the unions of judges, and by that of the legal profession. An Opposition deputy, M. Dumanov interpellated the government on December 22, 1932, and the scandals revealed were so grave, that the incriminated Minister was forced to resign. He was replaced by another Liberal, who refused to deviate from the line of conduct of his predecessor, and naturally, recriminations and complaints were not slow to appear. (Cf. *Mir* 7. VI. 1933, 13. IX. 1933 and 10. X. 1933).

The Liberals soon split up into three antagonistic fractions owing to their inability to divide equitably the spoils they derived from such offices as they occupied. Those who had been ousted from office were waging a surreptitious campaign against their nominal colleagues,

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- 661 even going to the extent of plotting with the Opposition
665 to bring about the fall of the Cabinet. The Agrarians from
the first were divided into some five groups, three of
which published party newspapers called the *Zemledelsko
Zname*, and each of which pretended to be the official
organ of this splintered up party. A bitter and uncompromising
campaign was being conducted among the warring
fractions. Some Agrarians were openly in receipt of sub-
sidies from Yugoslavia and France, and endeavouring to
foist on the country a policy which was considered anti-
national. One of the Agrarian leaders Obov, was accused
of receiving 100,000 francs monthly from France. The
most revolting and scandalous exposures were daily being
made as to the activities of the Agrarians by their mutu-
ally antagonistic Press. The most disgusting tales were
circulated which completely undermined the prestige of
the Government. The Agrarian Ministers had accepted a
gift of 800,000 leva for the election campaign from Obov
and K. Todorov, who for years had been at the service of
the Yugoslav government, but when they secured their no-
mination to office, they turned their backs on these do-
nators¹. They were no longer needed now that they could

¹ Most of these Agrarians politicians seem to form the scum
of the community. After Stamboliiski's fall they went abroad and
worked in close intelligence with their country's enemies. As revealed
in the *Sobranie* in November 1927, they accepted 5 million drachmae
from the Greeks, promising in exchange that when they would seize
power they would renounce the Bulgarian claim to an outlet on the
Aegean. Later they transferred their activities to Belgrade living
there at the expense of the Yugoslav Government which utilised
them to foment troubles in Bulgaria. A letter was read in the *So-
branie* on Dec. 24, 1931 purporting to be written by the brother of
Obov to a murdered Opposition deputy in 1924, and which contained
the following remarks: „Before we return to Sofia many of our pro-
minent adversaries will be killed. It will be well if you wrote us
what persons we must murder... I want from you a list of persons
who have to be murdered, numbers of Sofia garrison, police etc...

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dabble unchecked in the State coffers. A scathing exposure of one of the Agrarian Ministers, appeared in the Belgrade *Politika* on June 16, 1933 which was widely reproduced in the Bulgarian Press. 661 • 665

Virgil Dimov was accused of having concluded a pact with the Macedonian Committee, promising to reverse the pro-Serbian policy hitherto followed by the Agrarian organisation and to adopt a strictly nationalistic one, such as was approved of by Italy. In exchange he and his friends would receive, the support of the Macedonians, and subsidies from a foreign country, Italy. He was further accused of having in a very short time amassed a considerable fortune. This scandal reached its culmination on November 10, 1933, when the president of the Sobranje, N. Zachariev, another Agrarian, rose up and declared: "I was a colleague of V. Dimov, who was a poor man. But for two years he has been a minister and to-day he is a millionaire. I can no longer associate with these people". All attempts to maintain a semblance of unity disappeared, the Agrarians threatened to force a new election campaign by overthrowing the Government and proceeded accordingly to work up the peasant electorate, inciting it to avoid paying taxes and promising to absolve it from such payments if the Agrarians were returned. A final attempt was made to maintain the tottering Cabinet by throwing over the Radical Minister Kosturkov and dividing among Agrarians and Liberals the emoluments and benefits which this additional ministry would assure to its occupants. Democracy had deteriorated to such a degree that it became a farse and a make-belief,

we must destroy this government and create a friendly Bulgaria and a confederation with Serbia". The most revolting revelations were made concerning all the colleagues of the late Stambuliiski in the Sobranje on Jan. 4, 1932.

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665 which no one could further trust. One of the leading
661 Sofia newspapers, the *Mir*, wrote on May 12, 1934 :

„In Bulgaria there is no longer any State authority. At the head of the State are puny uncultured people who destroy and are incapable of constructing. And all these petty personalities are asking for more offices, more ministerial portfolios, more public funds for their political friends. Our Government is not a democracy, but purely and simply an organisation of marauding bands. The patient and submissive citizen asks how long will this state of affairs last?

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701 Against this canker of demoralisation the reserve officers, the only organised and patriotic force in the country, had several times protested and drawn the attention of the Government. They dispatched a deputation on January 18, 1933 to the Prime Minister recommending the adoption of certain measures which would curtail existing abuses. At the end of April 1933, they held a congress and they passed a resolution appealing to all men of goodwill to group themselves together and form a non-party government which might extricate the country from the bog in which it was wallowing. In another congress held at the end of 1933, they again insisted on the formation of a non-party Cabinet in order that the people might be saved from the prevailing demoralisation which had set in among the political parties. These reminders however, had been disregarded.

When in May 1934, the Radical member of the Cabinet was so rudely unhorsed by his colleagues, it became apparent that the Mushanov Cabinet was at the end of its tether. There were only two political forces powerful enough to replace it. The Agrarians, and Tsankov's Democratic Entente. They were utterly hostile to one another and each intent on excluding its rival from all participation in office. The advent of either to power meant the outbreak of a civil war, more bitter than that which had been waged in 1925. To prevent this calamity, the

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This policy is not to the liking of that great army of 648
functionaries, supported by the old politicians, and of the
palace circles, to all of whom self-interest suggests opposi-
tion to anything even remotely suggesting a curtailment
of their country's sovereignty. To them the strained politi-
cal situation in Europe has come as a gift of the Gods,
for it holds out the promise of a turn in the wheel of
fortune and of a means of retrieving what was lost in
the war. This implies an adventurous policy and entails
some carefully prepared preliminary steps. Such a policy
must be made to appeal to the masses as likely to
ameliorate their present difficult lot and at the same
time, the feeling of patriotism has to be exorcised in order
to make war appear once more an invigorating and
lucrative pursuit.

Hence the persistent circulation of such mendacious
reports to the effect that Gt. Britain was opposed to the
policy of a close understanding between Bulgaria and
Yugoslavia, and that she has decided to impress Bulgaria
into her service and confide to the latter the defence of
British interests in the Near East. „We are navigating in
British waters“ is the general comment on the present
situation with which one is greeted in Sofia. And the
prospect of the British Pactolus pouring its goldbearing
stream on the barren fields of Bulgaria makes all and
sundry beam with smiles. At the same time feverish
efforts are being made to instill some patriotic ardour in
the masses by intensive flag-waving and drum-beating.
There were never so many parades, patriotic speeches, and
celebrations of commemorations of victories, ridiculous in
themselves, since they all ended in a catastrophe, as there
have been during the past few months.

The direct cosequence of entrusting the government 661 •
to compromised personalities is that official statements
and acts are regarded with mistrust.

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•661 The arrival of Colonel D. Veltchev, the able colleague and supporter of K. Gheorghiev from abroad early in October 1935 at the instigation of two Cabinet Ministers, was seized upon by the Government as a pretext for dealing a crushing blow to its adversaries. Both, with many of their sympathisers and supporters, have been arrested on a charge of plotting against the Government and the Crown. In view of the fact that such charges as have been levelled against Col. Veltchev and K. Gheorghiev, namely, that they were co-operating with the left wing of the Agrarians and with the brigand chief, Dontso Usunov, have proved utterly unfounded, one may logically infer that this pretended plot is a staged-up affair aiming at the crushing of the only people who would resolutely oppose any attempt of involving Bulgaria in a new adventure and whom the force of circumstances would in all probability have again placed in power now that „Russia's significance as a beacon of hope for the forces of violent discontent seems likely to diminish to the vanishing point“.

800 What all self-respecting Englishmen are bound to resent most strongly is the shameless misuse which is being made of their country's name, and in view of the utter revulsion in all circles in Gr. Britain for any policy even remotely endangering peace, it is incumbent on authoritative circles at home to issue a formal and categorical disclaimer of the baseless reports which are being circulated in Sofia. This is all the more imperative remembering the tragic consequences of the misunderstandings which arose in 1915 through the interpretation given to British policy in Bulgaria. (Cf. p. 410),

Such a disavowal would take the wind out of the scandal mongers and plotters, and would help honest and patriotic Bulgarians to restore order, tranquillity, and concord in their long-suffering country.

XVII

BULGARIA CONTAMINATED

Great are your achievements, Comrade Kostov, as the builder of the Party, as the teacher and instructor of the Party members. Under your leadership and inspired by your heroic life, thousands of Communists were educated into unquestionable loyalty to the Party.

Declaration by the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party on Traicho Kostov's 50th birthday in 1947

ONLY a month after the Greek rebel radio announced that Markos had been liquidated, victim of a fatal inability to forget that he was a Greek as well as a Communist, the Bulgarian Communist Party was forced to admit that nationalist symptoms had appeared in its ranks also. The sufferer was the Deputy Premier of Bulgaria, Traicho Kostov, Secretary-General of the Party since 1944. On March 27, 1949, he was deprived of his office and dismissed from the Politburo. We have been supplied with a full Stalinist diagnosis of his case. 665 661 ●

Kostov had been a member of the Party since 1919, had spent fourteen years in Bulgarian prisons, had been Bulgaria's leading Communist organizer and would have seemed as immune to criticism on the score of discipline and orthodoxy as Georgi Dimitrov himself, chief Bulgarian émigré in Moscow, hero of the Reichstag fire trial and former Secretary-General of the Comintern. It was to Dimitrov that Kostov relinquished control in 1945 when Dimitrov returned to Sofia in the wake of the Red Army; and Dimitrov made him one of his trusted lieutenants, as Deputy Prime Minister and chairman of the economic and financial planning committee. Kostov

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661 wrote the Constitution of 1947, the Party pamphlets and the Five Year Plan. As things turned out, the most risky of his functions was planning and administering the national economy, for it involved making Bulgaria a service station for the Soviet economic machine. But this danger was not apparent at first. Kostov's long years of hazardous service in the underground, the intensity of his Communist faith and Dimitrov's affection and favor combined to make him the Number 2 man in the régime, and when Dimitrov became ill his mantle fell naturally enough on Kostov as Acting Prime Minister.

It was from this pinnacle of power that Kostov was toppled in March 1949. The grounds for his expulsion from the Politburo and his removal as Acting Prime Minister were "gross political and Party errors," "insincere and unfriendly policy regarding the Soviet Union" and "nationalistic deviations." On April 15, the news leaked out that Dimitrov had been sent to Russia "on leave" to repair his health. The Prime Minister's illness had evidently inaugurated a struggle for his succession. At the right moment the Kremlin issued its orders. Kostov, leader of the wing of the Party that had been more closely identified with the revolutionary struggle inside the country than with the international headquarters in Moscow, was dismissed and disgraced, and Vassil Kolarov, an elderly man of 73 who had spent most of the time since the 'twenties in Moscow, part of it as an official of the Comintern, became Acting Prime Minister in his place. Subsequently, Kostov was removed from the Central Committee of the Party, then from his position as a deputy in Parliament, and finally from the Party itself. On July 20 Parliament voted to have him indicted and tried for "economic sabotage."

Kolarov explained that his predecessor's crimes were particularly atrocious since they were not haphazard but formed "a system of political mistakes based on a glaringly expressed nationalist deviationism and anti-Bolshevik attitude towards the methods of Party leadership." Specifically, during the time that Kostov was acting as Prime Minister he had broadened the law against divulging state secrets and had applied it to the officials dealing with the Soviet trade representatives in Bulgaria; as a result, the Soviet agents had

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not been able to find out at what prices Bulgaria was selling her products to capitalist countries. In this way Kostov revealed his mistrust of the U.S.S.R. and went counter to the accepted rule that "secrets and commercialism" do not figure in Bulgarian-Soviet relations. A man's attitude toward the Soviet Union, Kolarov explained, defines his whole ideological orientation; anti-Sovietism is "the most heinous form of national deviation."¹

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The reader will recall that when opposition to the Soviets appeared in Poland it was dealt with at first quite circumspectly. Gomulka's connection with Tito was carefully concealed. Nothing of the sort was attempted in Kostov's case. By now the Cominform acknowledged that Titoism was not peculiar to Yugoslavia but was an infectious disease menacing the whole Stalinist empire.

The events which awakened Kostov's resistance were like those which had antagonized other satellite leaders. In 1948 the Bulgarian tobacco crop amounted to about 20 million kilos, of which the Soviets bought between 18 and 19 million kilos at arbitrarily fixed prices. When the time came for Bulgaria to market what remained of her crop, after the Soviets had taken the lion's share and after she had provided for her own domestic consumption, she found that she was competing in Italy, Egypt and New York with her own Bulgarian tobacco, offered by the Soviets at less than prevailing world prices. The Soviets profited in the same way with attar of roses, of which Bulgaria possesses almost a world monopoly. The Soviet purchasing agents in Sofia bought up the entire 1948 crop and resold it at higher prices in New York.² Later they laid hands on the store of this valuable essence accumulated during the war by the Bulgarian National Bank and disposed of it at whatever prices the world market would stand. Kostov apparently could not bear to see his country cheated in this way. In one sense it does not matter that the sums which the Soviet Government credits to the Bulgarian Government for its purchases in Bulgaria bear no relationship to the prices at which it later resells those same products abroad; it is all a matter of bookkeeping anyway, and Bulgaria cannot win. What does matter is that as the Soviet Government resells in hard-cur-

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¹ *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!*, Bucharest, May 13, 1949.

² *The Economist*, London, July 16, 1949.

439 rency areas, the dollars which it gets from the sale of Bulgarian products go to finance imports not into Bulgaria but into the Soviet Union. That ends the last vestige of Bulgaria's freedom of economic manoeuvre.

Bukharin might have called this sort of finagle the absence of "selfish competition," just as Kolarov called it the absence of "secrets and commercialism." Kostov decided that it was good old-fashioned exploitation, the sort of thing which he had always heard denounced as a mean capitalist trick. When he tried to tighten up the government agencies which dealt with the Soviet purchasing agents, however, he found that he was a "nationalist deviationist."

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661 The Sofia morning papers of November 30, 1949, carried the text of the formal indictment against Kostov,² based on a 32,000-word statement purporting to have been signed by him in prison and on similar statements by ten codefendants, all of them high government and Party officials. Kostov is described as a consistent supporter of "Left-sectarian," Trotskyite policies. While an émigré in Moscow in 1933-34 he supposedly formed contacts with many other Trotskyites, including Bela Kun and Tito; plotted to replace Dimitrov and Kolarov as leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party; and, as an official of the Balkan Secretariat of Communist Parties, recommended Tito for political work in Yugoslavia. All this seems vague and farfetched, no reason being given why with such a consistently bad record he was allowed to continue as Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Party and was promoted to be acting head of the government.

The indictment goes on to make the bland statement that when Germany's "final defeat" had been sealed on the Soviet front as far back as 1942 (*sic*), the British and American intelligence services, faced with this apparently unwelcome fact, and seeing how Soviet prestige was growing in Southeastern Europe, began to smuggle their agents into the underground Communist Party. Among those allegedly recruited besides Kostov was a former Minister of Finance, Stefanov, who was accused of having given the British information on the budget and on military expenditures in 1946 and 1947, and

² A translation in English is to be found in a supplement to the *New Times*, Moscow, December 7, 1949.

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Nikola Pavlov, former administrative secretary of the Politburo and Deputy Minister of Construction. These three were accused of having formed a "conspiratorial center" aimed at "overthrowing the lawful government of the country and replacing it by a criminal government headed by Kostov." The indictment also asserted that they had "endeavored to disrupt business, commercial and other economic ties between Bulgaria and the other People's Democracies headed by the Soviet Union, in order to deprive our country of the generous and disinterested aid of the U.S.S.R."

Of special interest is the further charge that Kostov "entered into secret criminal connections with Yugoslav leaders" with the intention of "depriving Bulgaria of her national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence by joining her to Yugoslavia." The "plot" for a federation is supposed to have begun when Kardelj, as already recounted, visited Sofia towards the end of 1944. Dimitrov was still in Moscow, Kostov was the undisputed leader on the spot and it was with him that Kardelj discussed the pros and cons of the project. The indictment admits that Kostov made no secret of this; he "informed the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party, which he headed in 1944, that Kardelj had been in the country and had suggested a federation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia," as well as that the Yugoslavs would submit a written proposal to this effect shortly. What he failed to tell his colleagues, says the indictment, was that the arrangement "was directed against the U.S.S.R." According to the indictment, Kardelj told Kostov that "the British and Americans had supplied the Yugoslav guerrillas with arms and ammunition on condition that, when the war was over, Tito would keep Yugoslavia away from the U.S.S.R.;" that in Tito's view Yugoslavia should "not definitely tie herself with the U.S.S.R., but should pursue a policy of her own and maintain and develop ties with the Western states;" that he would request withdrawal of Russian troops as soon as the war was over; that Soviet troops should leave Bulgaria too; and that the best means of bringing this about would be for Bulgaria to join Yugoslavia immediately, for then she would no longer be regarded as an enemy but as part of an Allied state, which would make the presence of Soviet troops on her soil "superfluous and entirely unjustified." Kostov contended that he had expressed

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661 doubts about all this, giving among other reasons his opinion that the Allies might oppose the idea of federation; and in fact the British Government did issue a formal warning that Bulgaria could not take any independent action until after there had been a treaty of peace. On this point the indictment merely mentions Kardelj's comment that if Allied protests were made they would be window-dressing. The project failed in the end, the indictment concludes, because of a warning sent by Dimitrov from Moscow.

In the summer of 1946, Kostov was sent on a formal visit of friendship to Belgrade on behalf of the Bulgarian Communist Party and is supposed to have used the opportunity to continue his subversive work. Alexander Rankovich, Yugoslav Minister of the Interior, is alleged to have talked with him about Tito's plan to create "a great comity of Southeastern European countries," while Tito himself spoke approvingly of the idea of a federation which "would dictate its will in the Balkans, and would represent a serious factor in international politics." The plot supposedly was carried further when Tito came to Sofia in November 1947 to sign the treaty of friendship. On this occasion, it was alleged, he urged Kostov to reorganize the Bulgarian Communist Party, form a new government and proclaim the union with Yugoslavia. If he found he needed help, Tito is supposed to have said, the Yugoslav Army stood ready to supply it, and since the help would be "within the framework of the federation," it would be a domestic affair and "no one could qualify it as an act of aggression."

Such, said the indictment, was the "criminal conspiracy against the state of Bulgaria, plotted and headed by Kostov." Before examining the evidence we might note that on their face some of the Bulgarian Government's contentions seemed improbable. Kardelj had reported that Kostov was very reserved on the federation question, indeed much more reserved about it than Dimitrov and the others. And Tito has asserted that he always distrusted Kostov as the most anti-Yugoslav of all the Bulgarian leaders. This would indicate that although Kostov's complaint against Moscow was similar to Tito's, he did not support Tito in the Cominform dispute. In September 1948, in fact, he strongly attacked Tito and his col-

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leagues; but of course he may simply have been endeavoring to offset criticisms being voiced against him by Party colleagues.

The trial was held in December 1949 in accordance with a new law, passed for the purpose, before a new court, set up for the purpose and from which there was no appeal. The sensation of the trial, and something new for Communist judges, was that Kostov in open court repudiated the confession which he was alleged to have signed in prison. The whole case against him was based on that confession and on the similar confessions of the other defendants. These did not revoke what they had said in jail but instead fell over themselves to confirm the worst of it and to find new grounds to inculcate both Kostov and themselves. While Kostov did not hide the fact that he had opposed Dimitrov in ideological and Party matters, or that he had miscalculated the strength of *kulaks* and other Bulgarian reactionary elements, he did categorically deny that he had ever been a spy or foreign agent, that he had had anything to do with sending Tito to Yugoslavia in 1934 or that he had been Tito's stooge in the negotiations for a Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation.

The judges at first could not believe their ears, and when Kostov insisted on repudiating his "confession" in spite of hoots from the audience and rebukes by his own counsel, they hastily adjourned court for half an hour to enable him to "rest" and "refresh his memory." After the rest period he still stuck to his guns. For two days the Communist press maintained a stunned silence. Then *Pravda* commented that Kostov had a "soft and oily voice" and the "cunning eyes of a thief," details which his colleagues might have noticed in the last twenty or thirty years, and a "bent back," which *Pravda* did not bother to explain he had acquired in 1924 when he jumped from a window in attempting to escape torture by the Sofia police.⁴

The account of the negotiations for a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation produced at the Kostov trial omits many well known facts and runs contrary to many others. Nothing is said about the active and

⁴ Cf. *The Economist*, London, December 24, 1949; for details of the trial see also *The New York Times*, December 8 and successive days.

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has since told why.⁸ In February and early March of 1948 Kardelj and Djilas were in Moscow trying to speed up Soviet economic aid. A Bulgarian delegation was there at the same time, headed by Dimitrov, Kolarov and Kostov. "In the presence of that delegation," asserts Tito, "Stalin himself imperatively demanded the immediate conclusion of an act of federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, while on the other hand the Soviet was against a federation with Albania." But in view of the fact that Yugoslav relations with the Soviet Union "were already strained" Tito looked on this renewal of the old plan with a fishy eye. "We came to the conclusion," he continues, "that the demand was put forward in order to facilitate the overthrow and subjugation of Yugoslavia."

Speaking of this matter with me, Tito explained that the creation of a Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation would have brought many Bulgarian leaders to Belgrade. Some would have received high places in the new joint government, and as they would have been under Russian orders Moscow would in this way have received a direct voice in Yugoslav affairs. He already was subject to so many kinds of Soviet interference that he was unwilling to open new doors for it. In any case, he added, not he but Dimitrov had taken the initiative for a federation to include Rumania and perhaps even Czechoslovakia. Dimitrov was unhappy over Bulgaria's increasing dependence on the Soviet Union and hoped to reverse the process by finding a place for her in a strong grouping. To a question as to why Dimitrov had not realized that this would get him into difficulties in Moscow, Tito replied that Dimitrov had just been in Bucharest, where his head had been turned a bit by the enthusiastic reception which he received from the Rumanian Communists and by the discovery that they too were restive under the tight Soviet rein. As a result, said Tito, Dimitrov became a bit too daring. Whether Dimitrov suffered physical punishment will never be known. He died in Russia in the summer of 1949 and Stalin stood among the honor guard by his catafalque.

Of all these matters no word was said at Kostov's trial. On December 14, 1949, he was found guilty on all charges and sentenced to death. The ten other defendants had tearfully inculpated both

⁸ Tito's speech at the opening of the Yugoslav National Assembly, April 26, 1950 (*Yugoslav Fortnightly*, Belgrade, May 3, 1950).

ie. the account of the negotiation for a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation, see cat. 116, pp. 205-209--- Analyst

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661 him and themselves in every imaginable sort of crime against the Bulgarian state, the Bulgarian Communist Party and, worst of all, the Soviet Union. They received prison sentences and fines. Kostov, according to witnesses, took the verdict calmly. It was the second time he had heard a death sentence pronounced against him, the first having been in 1942 when a royal Bulgarian military court ordered him shot for resistance to the Germans. This time the sentence was carried out. He was hanged on December 16, and the next day the Sofia press carried the text of a new "confession." There was of course no way of verifying it. It seems wildly improbable that after being sentenced Kostov would have recanted, even under torture, what he had previously maintained under torture and the threat of death.

A day after this show of Communist justice the electors of Bulgaria gathered in their polling places, decorated with pictures of Stalin, Bulgarian flags and doves of peace, to take part in national "elections." These had been scheduled for November but delayed to give time for the complete elimination of "Kostovism"—called "nothing but Titoism on Bulgarian soil" by Kostov's successor, Deputy Prime Minister Vulko Chervenkov (described to me by an American diplomat as "the most rigid and unintelligent of the Bulgarian Communists, with a neck like a bull and a face like a bull-frog"). As there was only a single list of candidates, the news that this list had been elected was not startling.

As good as any of the obituaries for Kostov was one inserted by Pijade in the speech already quoted: "If Traicho Kostov was hanged merely for wanting a federation with Yugoslavia, although he insisted on precisely the same form of federation, with Bulgarian hegemony, as all the other members of the Bulgarian Politburo, then, from their standpoint, from the standpoint of the indictment of that shocking trial, they have hanged an innocent man. But though they did hang a certain Kostov, the truth about the federation of the Southern Slavs cannot be hanged. Neither the hangman in Sofia nor his teachers are tall enough for that."

XVIII

PRESCRIPTION: FORCE

Faceless as water, naked as the dust.

Stephen Vincent Benét, "Litany for Dictatorship"

DICTATORS — and other demagogues when they are able—divert their publics from real miseries by denouncing foreign machinations, staging spectacular parades, sports shows, funerals and rallies, and starting witch hunts which always end in the conviction of an enemy, real or fictitious. We have no way of knowing how much this motive may have entered into the Kostov affair. He may have become genuinely troublesome to Moscow, and the decision to liquidate him may have been taken on grounds which are logical to a dictator and even to the victim, he having accepted the hazards of the game from the start. But even if Kostov were merely a scapegoat, he deserves and will receive no tears. His noose was made from the same rope that he had ordered used for so many others.

The terror started by the Bulgarian Communists against their rivals and opponents after the war was really ferocious, even for Communists and even by Balkan standards; and Kostov was in the lead in planning the hangings and shootings. Official Bulgarian reports state that by March 25, 1945, there had already been 131 political trials, at which over 10,000 persons had been found guilty, of whom over 2,000 had been executed.¹ Among them there certainly were Nazi collaborationists, but there also were anti-Communists of every stripe, including some who had been the bravest leaders of the anti-Nazi resistance and were the strongest surviving exponents of free and democratic government. In practice, collaborationists

¹ Statistics issued by G. Dimitrov, October 7, 1945, quoted by Albert A. Brandt, *Harper's Magazines*, December 1947.

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661 usually fared better in the "People's Courts" than liberals; having
665 compromised successfully with one dictatorial régime they knew how
to compromise with another to save their skins.

The Agrarians, Socialists and others had joined with the Communists in forming the "Fatherland Front" to take over from the Nazis. It was a mistake—the same mistake being made by liberals in all countries of supposing that they could collaborate on fair terms with Communists. The Bulgarian democratic elements also erred in not recognizing that American and British policy in the Balkans was chaotic and could not be depended upon after the war to prevent the spread of Soviet power in Eastern Europe. The first to pay for these mistakes were the leaders of the old Agrarian Party founded by the peasant hero, Alexander Stambulski. As they had always worked to raise peasant living standards within the framework of the general welfare, they were the most dangerous rivals of the Communists and became their first targets. The head of the Party, Dr. G. M. Dimitrov, ceded his place to Nikola Petkov under Soviet pressure in January 1945 and escaped abroad. Petkov, who had been one of the four signers of the 1944 armistice, still trusted the word of the Communists that the Fatherland Front would be a real coalition and that the Agrarians would be permitted to carry on independent political activity. He was executed September 23, 1947. The State Department protested that his trial was a "travesty on justice" and contrary to the rights guaranteed to Bulgarian citizens at Yalta. Kostov personally prepared the case against Petkov.

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642 With the last of the powerful and avowed opponents of dictatorship
665 out of the way, the Communists were free to proclaim Bulgaria a one-party state. They did so on February 4, 1948, securing for their country the honor of being the first satellite to abandon the pretense of a popular front. This was the period, one recalls, when Dimitrov was being rebuked by *Pravda* for favoring a Balkan or Danubian federation, and was issuing his denials, and when Moscow was beginning to talk secretly inside the Cominform about expelling Tito. The connection of these events is not to be missed.

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665 Ordinarily Dimitrov might not have gotten off so lightly, but there
665 were reasons for not sullyng the name of such a great Communist luminary, the hero of the Reichstag fire trial, at the very moment

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completed only 15 percent on time, and the spring sowing 10 percent.⁸

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The amount of compulsory self-criticism ensuing on such events, and the number of purges and trials of officials and arrests and trials of *kulaks*, bourgeois "saboteurs" and other criminals, can be imagined. In the article already quoted, Mr. Chernokolev admitted that there had been "serious mistakes" even in administering the comparatively moderate Bulgarian collectivization program, with the result that many "injustices" had occurred. Party organizations had failed to gauge correctly what was technically possible, people who owned land without actually working it had been admitted to collectives, even *kulaks* had been taken in, and so on. When lands were exchanged so that practicable coöperative farms might be organized, peasant rights often were "grossly violated." *Kulak* elements "took advantage of this and in a number of cases tried hard to win to their side the disgruntled poor and medium peasants and endeavored to turn them against the coöperatives and the people's power." They not only tried, apparently, but succeeded, for in some villages, the writer records, they fomented "strife between coöperative members and individual peasants," which "created a certain danger for the alliance between the working class and the poor and medium peasants."

Since the Cominform journal is designed for an international audience these comments were more moderate than those made on the spot. In a speech before the Central Committee of the Party in June 1949, Kolarov spoke of "clearly unreasonable and unfair" measures taken against the peasants; of many peasants being forced to join collectives against their will; and of peasants being indifferent to whether crops were big or small, the quota to be sold to the state at a fixed price being much too high—in some cases even comprising the total harvest.⁹

Kolarov put the blame for all that had gone wrong in the countryside on Kostov. So did Chervenkov. So did the Bulgarian press. So did the Committee which investigated Kostov's activities for the Grand National Assembly. It reported that besides the crimes de-

⁸ *New York Herald Tribune*, April 16, 1950.

⁹ Quoted in *The Economist*, London, July 16, 1949.

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scribed in the preceding chapter he had "carried out a policy leading to the estrangement of the overwhelming mass of medium peasants and of a great part of the small peasants from the Fatherland Front and putting them under the influence of *kulaks* and the reaction, thus destroying the union between workers and peasants." ¹⁰ This was very convenient. At one stroke Kostov was linked with the crisis in the countryside, and an excuse was provided for the existence of the crisis. It was not a very good excuse, for the same difficulties with the peasants continued after Kostov had been eliminated from any share in the country's economic life. As for the expectation that the trial would sober nationalist elements in the Party, that did not seem to work out to Moscow's satisfaction either. One count of top-level Communist officials purged in the six months beginning October 1949 showed a tally of nearly 50.

Class war in the villages, presaged by Dimitrov in December 1948, did not materialize at once. The expectation may have been that the simple threat would overcome peasant resistance, but when it did not a new model statute for collective farms was brought up "for discussion," i.e. to prepare the peasants for what the Party had decided would now be imposed by force. Peasants who had come into the collective system and those who had stayed out would both be hit. A member's share in the profits of a coöperative (if there were profits: another story) was henceforth going to be figured 30 percent on the amount of land he had put in and 70 percent on the number of "work days" he contributed, instead of being compensated, as formerly, in direct proportion to the amount of land and the number of "work days." In other words, he was becoming one-third a landowner and two-thirds a state agricultural worker. If he knew about what had happened to the Russian peasants in the final step of the Soviet agrarian "reform" in 1937 he could foresee what would become of the remaining one-third of Bulgarian land values. Actually, of course, the distinction between "rent" for land and "pay" for labor often was theoretical anyway. The product of a collective is turned in to the state in amounts fixed in advance and in return for payment at rates which in practice are confiscatory. A

¹⁰ Report by the Bulgarian radio, Sofia, July 20, 1949, of the proceedings on that date in the Bulgarian Grand National Assembly.

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474 surplus may or may not remain to be divided among the peasants.
 423 Often, as Kolarov admitted, there is none. The rate at which it
 661 would have been divided if it had existed is then only of theoretical
 interest. There is no space here to indicate the punishments awaiting
 the peasants who infringe the new statute.¹¹ Even negligence is defined as "treason to the common good" and punished as—treason. But I must add one item contributed by a Bulgarian friend of mine, for it reveals clearly one of the important intentions of present Communist policy in Bulgaria. In this man's native village the coöperative contains both industrial and agricultural workers. The first group is scrupulously allotted the same number of ration cards as the second. Nothing could be fairer, except that the first group contains 14 persons and the latter about 500. "Recipe for horse and rabbit stew: one horse, one rabbit."

Membership in collectives is "voluntary," but the meaning of this is shown by Prime Minister Chervenkov's description of what is to happen to peasants who do not join. "All tractors and agricultural machines belonging to peasants outside the coöperative farms should be confiscated," he has warned, and in future "only peasants belonging to coöperative farms can use tractors and machines." After this gloss on the 1950 model statute there is no need to go into further details. Peasants who do not have the use of farm machinery cannot fulfill their government quotas, let alone have anything left over to feed themselves and their families. They will "volunteer" or starve.

177 We have seen repeatedly that Bulgaria is the satellite where extreme Soviet measures are given their tryout. She was the first to suppress religious freedom and the first to introduce the system of local government by soviets. She was also the first, as already mentioned, to become officially a one-party state, and Dimitrov was the first satellite leader to proclaim the advent of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Russia's reasons for pushing ahead in Bulgaria seem to be two. It is the country where, with the exception of Rumania, her physical domination comes closest to being absolute. But whereas Russians are contemptuous of Rumanians, and are hated in return, they feel close to Bulgarians in race and language and suppose that they will repay past favors by swinging naturally into their allotted

¹¹ Details are given in *The Economist*, London, May 27, 1950.